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Averroes and Hegel on Philosophy and Religion

CATARINA BELO



AVERROES AND HEGEL ON PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Comparing Averroes' and Hegel's positions on the relation between philosophy and religion, this book explores the theme of the authorities of faith and reason, and the origin of truth, in a medieval Islamic and a modern Christian context respectively. Through an in-depth analysis of Averroes' and Hegel's parallel views on the nature of philosophical and religious discourse, Belo presents new insights into their perspectives on the relation between philosophical knowledge and religious knowledge, and the differences between philosophy and religion. In addition, Belo explores particular works which have not yet been studied by modern scholarship.

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Introduction

Philosophy and Religion in Hegel and Averroes

In an article concerning the theological position of Averroes (Arabic Ibn Rushd, 1126–1198 CE), Spanish scholar J.I. Saranyana traces the history of scholarship on Averroes to the present with a focus on a particular issue: the Andalusian philosopher's true position with regard to religion.¹ Much ink has been spilt on this controversial issue since the Middle Ages, when Averroism was often perceived as conflicting with religion in general and in particular with Christianity. To Averroes was ascribed the theory of the 'double truth', according to which there is a religious truth and a philosophical truth which are often at variance, with the hidden assumption that philosophical truth is preferable to religious truth. Among the first modern interpreters of Averroes, Saranyana mentions Ernest Renan. On Saranyana's interpretation, Renan imputes to Averroes views similar to those held by the German idealist philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). According to Saranyana, Hegel defended the idea that philosophy and religion have the same content, but express themselves in different ways: religion through imagination and representation, and philosophy in a conceptual and intellectual, hence more rigorous, way. Saranyana considers that this view favours philosophy over religion, inasmuch as the philosophical message is perceived to contain and qualitatively to supersede the religious message.

The present study aims to examine the relationship between philosophy and religion, based on the similarities and differences between philosophical language or discourse and religious language, first in Averroes and then in Hegel, with a view to shedding light on the relation between philosophy and religion, a theme that preoccupied both philosophers throughout their lifetimes.

This study offers a thematic rather than a strictly historical comparison, given that Hegel does not seem to have been directly influenced by Averroes and

¹ Josep Ignasi Saranyana, 'Los presupuestos teológicos de Averroes', in *Averroes y los Averroismos: Actas del III Congreso Nacional de Filosofía Medieval* (Zaragoza: Sociedad de Filosofía Medieval, 1999), pp. 129–44, especially pp. 134–5. A connection between Islamic philosophy and Hegel on this issue, as Saranyana points out, is also made by Rafael Ramón Guerrero, 'La filosofía árabe medieval', in *Actas del I Congreso Nacional de Filosofía Medieval*, ed. Jorge Ayala Martínez (Zaragoza: Sociedad de Filosofía Medieval-Ibercaja, 1992), pp. 129–57, in particular pp. 147 and 152, focusing particularly on al-Kindi and Alfarabi.

does not rate the medieval Muslim philosophers highly in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, considering them merely to repeat and convey, for the most part, Aristotle's views. He considers medieval Islamic philosophy to have contributed nothing particular or special to the history of philosophy, but notes its imaginativeness (probably having in mind the theology – *kalām* – tradition, to which he devotes a much more detailed treatment than he does to philosophy proper). He does not think of it as philosophy as such, and he follows Maimonides' account of the development of Islamic philosophy and theology in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, duly noting the rise of Aristotelianism in this period. The relation between philosophy and religion is not seen as controversial; rather, Hegel states that the philosophers (and theologians) developed their debates within a purely religious context and were limited by dogma and Islamic revelation. Their aim was thus to defend Islamic ideas – an emphasis on religion which is probably explained by Hegel's focus on the Islamic theologians. The main philosophers, such as al-Kindi, Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes he treats as merely Aristotelian commentators.² Thus his own thinking on philosophy and religion is not directly influenced by medieval Islamic philosophy, which is not surprising, given that scholarly research on medieval Islamic philosophy had hardly begun – it was in fact truly inaugurated by Renan's *Averroès et l'averroïsme* (1852). A possible impact through medieval authors influenced by Averroist ideas is not to be excluded but would require a separate study. Hegel had many words of praise for medieval Scholastic philosophy, in particular for St Anselm of Canterbury, and he was fond of other, controversial authors such as Meister Eckhart.

In spite of the many centuries separating Averroes and Hegel, and the widely different social and cultural milieus in which they lived, there is a remarkable similarity in their approaches, as we will see. The relationship between philosophy and religion preoccupied many philosophers and thinkers, but it occupies the absolute centre stage in the philosophies of Averroes and Hegel, due to their personal interests and to the contemporary intellectual challenges facing them. A comparison between these two philosophers should also shed further light on their views, by comparing and contrasting them. Differences between these two philosophers will also be noted towards the end of this study.

It must be borne in mind that many contemporary studies are available on Averroes' approach to religion, as well as on Hegel's philosophy of religion. This study will focus on the specificities of religious versus philosophical discourse in Averroes and Hegel respectively, while taking into account previous scholarly contributions to the discussion of this or related topics. In Averroes, this implies a detailed study of the difference between the demonstrative method as opposed to the dialectical and rhetorical methods, and in Hegel a discussion of the differences between religious representation and conceptual (philosophical) thinking, in the various works in which both philosophers treat these topics.

² G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), pp. 514–23.

In analysing these themes, I take into account two radically different historical and cultural contexts, and the medieval versus the post-Enlightenment setting, as well as the religious background of both philosophers, Sunni Islam in the case of Averroes, and Christianity, more specifically Lutheranism, in the case of Hegel. The stark historical and cultural contrast between Averroes and Hegel will only help to bring their positions into sharper focus, especially as there is an evident parallelism between them.

Averroes' 'agenda' for reconciling philosophy and religion is explicitly laid down in his work *The Decisive Treatise* (*Faṣl al-maḳāl*), where Averroes seeks to demonstrate that the message of the Qu'ran is identical with the pursuit of truth undertaken by philosophy, which for Averroes is equivalent to Aristotle's thought.

The *Decisive Treatise* states that the religious and the philosophical message are at bottom one and the same. On this assumption, religion and philosophy present the truth in different ways but share the same content. For him, the text which contains religious truth is the Qur'an, rather than Aristotle, who addresses primarily philosophers and draws a specific, limited audience. The Qur'an is directed at everyone, including Muslim theologians and philosophers. Averroes states that the Qur'an contains three ways of producing belief or faith in three corresponding classes of people: demonstrative, dialectical and rhetorical (or, respectively, the philosophers, the speculative theologians of Islam, and the majority of people). How convincing is his view that the same truth can be validly expressed in these three ways without a change in content?

This project of harmonisation is implicitly pursued in other works, not only his non-exegetical works, such as the *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (*Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*), in which Averroes speaks in his own name in defence of the philosophical tradition, but also in his commentaries on Aristotle, in which he introduces religious and theological topics and debates into his comments. Dubbed the 'Commentator' of Aristotle's works in medieval times, Averroes presents remarkably original insights into several philosophical issues. One of the topics in which he showed great resourcefulness and originality was the issue of the relation between Islam and philosophy.

Religion is an abiding theme in Hegel's writings. The young Hegel wrote a *Life of Jesus* and various works on Christianity and Judaism, as well as on ancient Greek religion. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807) Hegel discusses religion and its relation to philosophy, including the difference between representational thinking and conceptual thinking, employed respectively in religion and philosophy; in fact, Hegel's most elaborate single discussion of the distinction between philosophy and religion is found in this work.

In Hegel, this question can be approached from at least two different, but related, perspectives. An epistemological approach would take into account the specificities of religious versus philosophical discourse. Which kind of intellectual faculty or mode of apprehension is used in religious, as opposed to philosophical, thought? On the other hand, the issue could be approached from a metaphysical or ontological perspective, given that in Hegel the epistemological is never truly

separable from the ontological, if his dialectical scheme is taken into account. The intertwining of the epistemological and the ontological is particularly evident in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit's* account of the process through which the Spirit becomes what it truly is through self-knowledge, eventually attaining to absolute knowledge. Thus knowing and being are united in Hegel's Spirit, the axis of his systematic philosophy. This study will focus on the epistemological aspects of the relation between philosophy and religion without losing sight of the ontological dimension of the question.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* presents the unfolding of the Spirit as it proceeds through various stages of development, from consciousness to absolute knowing through self-consciousness, reason and Spirit. Hegel claims that philosophy and religion represent the same substance but in different ways. Philosophy uses pure concept or notion (*Begriff*), where the form is entirely adequate to the content conveyed, while religion uses representation (*Vorstellung*), which appears to be a lower stage of knowledge or consciousness. While it is clear that Hegel considered Christianity to be the last stage of the unfolding of the Spirit in religious terms, his position is not unambiguous if this consummate religion implies a degree of 'picture-thinking', as some translators have rendered his 'Vorstellung', which seems to fall short of the accuracy of philosophical discourse.

In what follows, I will first present the problem in Averroes and Hegel and analyse its reception among philosophers and scholars, proceeding to providing an overview of the central chapters of this study. The questions surrounding the relation between philosophy and religion in Averroes and Hegel are complex and have a long history with regard to their impact on subsequent philosophical movements and trends. If we consider the case of Averroes, we find an explicit attempt to show the convergence between philosophy, more specifically the Aristotelian tradition as developed in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and religion, particularly Islam. An Arabic and Islamic tradition of philosophy developed in the wake of the reception of Greek and Hellenistic philosophy into the Islamic Empire – once the Islamic armies had entered geographical areas that were part of the Hellenistic world. While its relation to Islamic religion was always in the background and shaped that tradition, Averroes makes it an explicit theme in his writings. Therefore it is worth noting that this Andalusian philosopher's approach marks a watershed in the understanding of the relation between philosophy (*falsafa*, from the Greek) and Islam. Previously, Muslim philosophers such as al-Kindi (d. c.866), Alfarabi (d. 950) and Avicenna (d. 1037) had included Islamic elements in their philosophical systems but in a rather less explicit manner. We find in al-Kindi the defence of a universe created in time, contrary to Aristotle's position in the *Physics* that the world has existed from eternity and will not cease to exist. Al-Kindi also engaged in the theological debates that were taking place in Baghdad in the ninth century. In Alfarabi's *Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City*, we find a comprehensive system that encompasses all aspects of reality. The attentive reader cannot fail to notice the similarities between Alfarabi's description of the One with its many attributes and the attributes traditionally ascribed to God in Islam.

The focus on God's oneness, perfection, eternity, wisdom and splendour remind us of the medieval Islamic debates over God's attributes. Some aspects of Avicenna's philosophy also bear distinctive marks of an Islamic approach to religion and God. Avicenna's metaphysics, in particular, provides a proof of God's existence and stresses his oneness, raising the attributes of existence and oneness above all others. These and other medieval Islamic philosophers integrate religious themes, such as prophethood and revelation, into their works.

Notwithstanding this context, and in spite of noticeable elements of Islamic doctrine and the influence of Islamic theology (*kalām*) in these philosophers, some could argue that a more explicit attempt to show the congruence between philosophy and Islamic religion, in particular with regard to the creation of the world and God's agency and nature, was lacking. Ibn Tufayl's (c. 1110–1185) philosophical romance *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, which attempts to show that religion teaches the same as natural reason, can arguably still be considered an implicit endeavour to highlight the harmony between philosophy and religion. Since Ibn Tufayl was a contemporary of Averroes in al-Andalus, and introduced Averroes to the Almohad emir Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, his work may well have directly influenced Averroes.

Although influenced by *kalām*, a religious discipline seeking to unveil God's nature and attributes and the status of creatures and creation on the basis of the Qur'an as a whole, *falsafa* nevertheless remained a separate discipline which borrowed primarily from the Aristotelian tradition, through the Arabic translation of the majority of works by Aristotle and his commentators, and from the Neoplatonic school, known primarily through the *Theology of (the Pseudo-) Aristotle*, which consisted in a translation of the last three books of Plotinus' *Enneads*. Philosophy, as a foreign discipline, was viewed in many sectors of the Islamic establishment with suspicion, and its orthodoxy was questioned.

It is worth recalling that, beginning in the eighth century, the Greek-into-Arabic translation movement made available to Arabic readers a wealth of scientific and philosophical works, paving the way for the further development of various scientific fields by Arabs and Muslims across the Islamic Empire. While some of these 'discoveries', such as mathematics, were welcomed and accepted for their usefulness, other disciplines, such as philosophy, in particular physics and metaphysics, were viewed as conflicting with religion in their unorthodox positions on God and creation. Several philosophers in the Greek tradition accepted that the world was eternal rather than created in time, and could not accept that God, who was unmovable and unchangeable, would care for the particulars of his creation, or could concern himself with individual human destinies. One may argue that these philosophers, such as Avicenna and Alfarabi, were more engaged in working out the implications of the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophical traditions, conceiving systems based on Neoplatonic theories, than in attempting explicitly to incorporate aspects of Islamic religion into their systems. A case in point is their position on the soul, stating that not all souls survive after death, and also leaving open the issue of bodily resurrection.

The issue of the compatibility of *falsafa* with Islam reaches a high point with the accusations raised by al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) in his *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. Al-Ghazzali was a prominent Muslim theologian who had devoted his life to the study of all forms of learning, until he experienced a religious conversion which led him to examine the various disciplines of learning in the light of their orthodoxy. He finds fault with the philosophers and their defence of the eternity of the world, and of a purely intellectual God who has no basis in the Qur'an, is neither omnipotent nor omniscient and appears to lack a will. In addition, philosophers fail to prove, or even take an interest in, the resurrection of the human body after death. These views, according to al-Ghazzali, contradict explicit Qur'anic statements to the effect that God created the world in time by a free decision, that he knows every detail in the universe and that human beings will be resurrected, body and soul, after death.

Al-Ghazzali championed a particular school of theology, the Ash'arite school, named after its founder al-Ash'ari (d. 935). This school is known for its more literal reading of the Qur'an and a defence of the uncreatedness of the Qur'an, which they viewed as the eternal speech of God, rather than as something created by him. Moreover the Ash'arites qualified the theory of human freedom and responsibility, which was a moot point in medieval Islamic theology. Another major, earlier school, the Mu'tazilite school (founded in the mid-eighth century), had defended the createdness of the Qur'an and human freedom and responsibility (because God could not justly reward and punish human beings if they lacked true freedom of action). The Mu'tazilite view was closer to that of the philosophers – indeed al-Kindi was sympathetic to their position – but it was the Ash'arite school which came to dominate in Sunni Islam.

Al-Ghazzali's attack on philosophy did not go unnoticed. Averroes, noting the influence and prevalence of al-Ghazzali's writings and theology in his native Andalusia, and seeing the threat posed to philosophy, made an eloquent and systematic effort to rehabilitate this discipline and an explicit endeavour to defend Islamic philosophy and the legitimacy of studying Aristotle and the Ancients. He carried out this project in works such as *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, a point-for-point refutation of al-Ghazzali's attacks on the philosophers, but most pointedly in his *Decisive Treatise on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*. In this work, which will be the subject of the next chapter, he set himself the twofold task of demonstrating that, according to Islamic law, it is permissible to study philosophy, including the books of the Ancients, and to show that philosophy does not contradict Islamic religion. Before detailing in the next chapter how he carried out this project, it is worth noting his emphasis on the existence of only one truth. According to Averroes, there is not a religious truth and a philosophical truth that are at odds, but only one truth to be found in both philosophy and religion. In this process, Averroes attempted to defend a more rationalist approach (which allowed for a greater freedom in interpreting the Qur'an in the light of human reason) and thus the freedom to philosophise; but he was unable to reverse the trend set by al-Ghazzali.

So how did the theory of the double truth come to be associated with Averroes? This controversy goes back to the Middle Ages and the transmission of Arabic science and philosophy to the European Latin world. Parallel to the rise of the universities, a renewed interest in the philosophy of Aristotle and his commentators made itself felt. The medieval universities purported to teach all the subjects of knowledge – this included philosophy (as well as law and medicine) with all its branches, not excluding the natural sciences. One philosopher was known to have written extensively on all subjects – Aristotle, whose works were considered dense and difficult to grasp. Therefore, a need was felt for the use of commentaries, ancient and medieval, on the work of the Stagirite. No commentaries were more detailed than those produced by Averroes, and he came to be known as ‘the Commentator’. He wrote different kinds of commentaries, some more detailed than others, and his long, highly detailed commentaries were soon translated into Latin and became widely read.

It took the best part of the thirteenth century for this science and philosophy to be adapted by Christian philosophers and theologians and incorporated into Christian theology. Some of the figures involved in this effort were St Albert the Great and especially his student St Thomas Aquinas, the first having written extensively on Aristotelian science and philosophy, and the latter incorporating Aristotelian logic and ethics into a comprehensive system of Christian theology. While an earlier period, the Patristic period, had seen the adoption of Neoplatonic language and concepts into Christian theology, this new phase implied an acceptance of Aristotelian language and substantial aspects of his philosophy as a means of expressing Christian theology and dogma. However, in order to achieve this, while ensuring adherence to correct doctrine, philosophy was made to serve and be subsumed under theology (in the same way that reason was subordinated to faith), the latter being the preferable, superior discipline of the two. Any doctrine that was deemed to challenge church dogma would be rejected, in a smooth adoption of Aristotelian philosophy.

With regard to Averroes’ role in this process, it should be noted that his works dealt with a vast range of topics, from all branches of philosophy to medicine and jurisprudence, and not all of these works were translated into Latin; thus a partial and even distorted image of this philosopher was bound to emerge in the Latin West. His works defending the harmony between faith and reason, and seeking to articulate religion and philosophy, were not known to the likes of St Albert the Great and St Thomas Aquinas, who opposed the philosophical school that came to be known as Averroism. Moreover, Averroes explicitly stated in his long commentaries, written towards the end of his life, that Aristotle had founded the main disciplines of knowledge, namely logic, physics and metaphysics, and had committed no significant errors, wherefore nothing significant could be added to his ideas and writings. This appeared to place Aristotle above other sources of knowledge, specifically revelation; and this did not go unnoticed by his Latin readers.

In addition his interpretations of Aristotle were read with a critical eye and not accepted wholesale. In particular, the eternity of the world, defended by Averroes

as it had been proved by Aristotle, was not acceptable to Christian theologians. They also rejected Averroes' particular interpretation of Aristotle on the soul, to the effect that the human intellect does not survive individually after death but becomes fused with a universal intellect, which is common to all human beings. While, for instance, Avicenna, whose works were also translated into Latin, defended the idea that the soul retains in the afterlife the individuality it had acquired by being attached to a specific body, Averroes interpreted Aristotle's text as stating that the soul became totally separate from the material, bodily element, and could have no individuality, an objectionable view in the eyes of Christian theologians because it undermined the dogma of individual salvation and immortality.³

The process of adaptation of Aristotelian metaphysical principles and science into the medieval Christian context was a collective effort, which unfolded under the strict supervision of Church leaders, Aristotelian studies being banned at several stages by concerned bishops. In particular, Christian theologians did not feel bound to accept Aristotle's argument for the eternity of the world, especially as it contradicted the biblical account of creation in time. Therefore, notwithstanding their admiration for the Stagirite, they did not support all of Aristotle's positions.

The reception of Aristotelian studies was remarkably different in the Islamic world than later in the Christian world. As Averroes states in his *Decisive Treatise*, there is no consensus on matters of doctrine in the Islamic community, whereas a consensus regarding matters of religious practice does exist. This allowed theologians and philosophers a more or less free interpretation of the Qur'an and great freedom in adopting and assimilating the works of the ancient philosophers.

Averroes uses this argument to make a case for incorporating Aristotelian science into the Islamic sciences – although these arguments were not known, as we have seen, to the medieval Latin theologians. This freedom of inquiry into theoretical matters had also given rise to many disparate schools of theology in Islam, which championed readings of the Qur'an which were more or less literal and a general approach to religion which could be more rationalist or more traditional.

While several thirteenth-century Christian theologians took it upon themselves gradually to integrate Aristotelian philosophy into Christianity, some reclaimed the right to teach Aristotle independently of revelation. Thus, a school inspired by Averroes' interpretations of Aristotle thrived in Europe from the thirteenth century onwards. This movement, known as Latin Averroism, had as its major exponent Siger of Brabant (ca. 1240–1280s), who, contrary to the prevalent trend in Christian theology, defended the idea that reason need not submit to revelation or scripture, but should have free rein to inquire by itself. In connection with Siger of Brabant, double truth consisted in affirming the independence of philosophical statements from religious statements. Religion and philosophy could say different or even

³ Averroes came to be associated with materialism (thus denying any spiritual reality) from the thirteenth century onwards; see Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme: Essai historique*, 4th ed. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882), p. 237.

opposite things concerning the same subject.⁴ While for some this divergence of truths need not necessarily create problems for theology, some Latin Averroists were considered to have followed philosophical, rather than theological, truth.⁵

The term Averroism had many meanings: it could refer to scholars who simply used and admired Averroes' commentaries, or it could be applied to those who defended the ideas contained in those commentaries, upholding specifically

⁴ This particular theory of the double truth seeks to avoid a clash between religious authority and philosophical theories. As Gilson states, while admitting that he had not found any medieval philosopher openly admitting this theory of the double truth, 'in order to free themselves from those contradictions, some among the Masters of Arts of the Parisian Faculty of Arts chose to declare that, having been appointed to teach philosophy, and nothing else, they would stick to their own job, which was to state the conclusions of philosophy such as necessarily follow from the principles of natural reason. True enough, their conclusions did not always agree with those of theology, but such was philosophy and they could not help it. Besides, it should be kept in mind that these professors would never tell their students, nor even think among themselves, that the conclusions of philosophy were true. They would say only this, that such conclusions were necessary from the point of view of natural reason; but what is human reason as compared with the wisdom and power of an infinite God? ... The conclusions of philosophy are at variance with the teaching of Revelation; let us therefore hold them as the *necessary* results of philosophical speculation, but, as Christians, let us believe that what Revelation says on such matters is *true*; thus, no contradiction will ever arise between philosophy and theology, or between Revelation and reason', Étienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), pp. 56–7.

⁵ Various scholars suggest that the theory of the double truth was not championed by the medieval philosophers to which it was attributed, with the underlying assumption that it was used as an accusation against them. According to Carlos Bazán, Alain de Libera, for instance, attributes its invention to Étienne Tempier, the bishop of Paris who condemned many Aristotelian theories that were being taught at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris in the thirteenth century. 'Four such doctrines appear to offer the best chances of finding the defining features of radical Aristotelianism: unicity of the intellect, eternity of the world, intellectual determinism, and the idea of happiness attained through philosophy as the most perfect state of human life', B. Carlos Bazán, 'Radical Aristotelianism in the Faculties of Arts: The Case of Siger of Brabant', in *Albertus Magnus und die Anfänge der Aristoteles-Rezeption im lateinischen Mittelalter von Richardus Rufus bis zu Franciscus de Mayronis*, ed. Ludger Honnefelder, Rega Wood, Mechthild Dreyer and Marc-Aeilko Aris (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2005), p. 590. For the association of the theory of the double truth with Étienne Tempier, see also Zeinab El-Khodeiry, *Athar Ibn Rushd fī Falsafat al-'Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* (Beirut: Dār al-tanwīr, 2007), p. 138; and Massimo Campanini in his Introduction to the *Incoherence of the Incoherence: Averroë, L'incoerenza dell'incoerenza dei filosofi*, ed. Massimo Campanini (Turin: UTET Libreria, 2006), p. 52.

Averroes' brand of Aristotelianism.⁶ This could mean the defence, for instance, of a single immaterial intellect for all humanity, or the eternity of the world.⁷

Averroist theories developed throughout the Middle Ages, as did local Averroist schools in Italy (noticeably Padua) up to and beyond the Renaissance. There were many admirers of Averroes, as well as many detractors, from among both the Dominicans and the Franciscans. Given the threat posed by Averroism to Church doctrine and authority, the Fifth Lateran Council particularly targeted this school of philosophy. Its eighth session, held on 17 December 1513, forbade schools of philosophy from teaching the mortality of the human soul and the theory that there is one intellect for all humanity. Moreover, the theory of the double truth (together with the assumption that there was a philosophical truth at variance with scripture) was rejected.⁸

Averroism was also associated with the 'blasphemy of the three impostors', which claimed that the founders of the three main religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, were not divinely inspired but taught a natural doctrine.⁹ This theory

⁶ See Dag Nikolaus Hasse, 'Averroica Secta: Notes on the Formation of Averroist Movements in Fourteenth-Century Bologna and Renaissance Italy', in *Averroès et les Averroïsmes juif et latin: Actes du Colloque international, Paris, 16–18 juin 2005*, ed. J.-B. Brenet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 307–31, especially pp. 315–16. Hasse furthermore notes that certain scholars of Siger of Brabant, such as Van Steenberghe, do not consider Siger of Brabant an Averroist. Hasse himself defends the idea that Averroism – as a school of philosophy, with Averroes thought of as a philosopher in his own right rather than just a commentator – only comes of age around 1500, and matures during the Renaissance (*ibid.*, p. 324).

⁷ 'It has long been observed that the term "Averroista," since its first occurrence in Thomas Aquinas' *De unitate intellectus*, was linked to a specific philosophical position: Averroes' unicity thesis. It is obvious, however, that "Averroists" were associated with more theses, predominantly in psychology, physics and metaphysics: (such) as the (Aristotelian) thesis of the eternity of the world, the denial of God's infinite power, the denial of God's knowledge of particulars, the theory that first matter is characterized by an indeterminate dimensionality, which is coeval with it, or the theory of the happiness as reached through knowledge of the separate substances', Hasse, 'Averroica Secta', pp. 316–17.

⁸ Karl Werner, 'Der Averroismus in der christlich-peripatetischen Psychologie des späteren Mittelalters', *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historische Classe der Akademie der Wissenschaften* 98 (1881): pp. 175–320; repr. in *Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 69, *Abu l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198)*, Texts and Studies I, *Ibn Rushd in the Western Tradition*, collected and reprinted by Fuat Sezgin in collaboration with Mazen Amawi, Carl Ehrig-Eggert, Eckhard Neubauer (Frankfurt am Main: Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1999), p. 125.

⁹ See Paul Alphandéry, 'Y a-t-il eu un averroïsme populaire au XIII^e et au XIV^e siècle?', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 44 (1901): pp. 395–406; repr. in *Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 69, *Abu l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198)*, Texts and Studies I, *Ibn Rushd in the Western Tradition*, collected and reprinted by Fuat Sezgin, in collaboration with Mazen Amawi, Carl Ehrig-Eggert, Eckhard Neubauer (Frankfurt am Main: Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University,

resurfaced during the Enlightenment and was used as an argument aimed at undermining Church doctrine and authority.¹⁰ These ideas were to find fertile ground in the minds of the Enlightenment thinkers, such as Diderot, La Mettrie and D'Holbach.¹¹ An influence of Averroism on the Enlightenment can thus be discerned, but we must bear in mind that Averroism conveyed a truncated and thus distorted view of Averroes' philosophy, which defended the identity between religious and philosophical truth.¹²

The first part of the present study, devoted to Averroes, examines the differences between religious and philosophical language in Averroes' works, in particular those that directly deal with the relation between philosophy and Islam, and more specifically those dealing with the various types of discourse, demonstrative, dialectical and rhetorical. Since the positions defended in the commentaries can differ somewhat from the ones held in his 'original' works, some scholars believe to have found the true Averroes in one to the exclusion of the other genre. However, given Averroes' own cross-references between these works, I will not make that distinction and will take both the commentaries and his more personal works as expressions of his own view – without losing sight of the fact that he believed that Aristotle's works contained the truth and nothing significant (or dissonant) could be added to them.

I shall begin with Averroes' description of the different types of discourse in the *Decisive Treatise* and proceed to analyse his detailed commentaries on these issues as treated by Aristotle, respectively in *Posterior Analytics*, which deals with demonstrative discourse, in *Topics*, which deals with dialectical discourse, and finally *Rhetoric*, which deals with rhetorical discourse. Therefore the theme of the three kinds of discourse will be dealt with in the *Decisive Treatise* and then in his

1999), pp. 197–209, p. 199. See also Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, pp. 252, 279, 292, 298, for his reputed denial of the Eucharist. In his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) also associated Averroes with the theory of the three impostors; see Abraham Anderson, *The Treatise of the Three Impostors and the Problem of Enlightenment: A New Translation of the Traité des Trois Imposteurs (1777 Edition)* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), p. 148.

¹⁰ Descartes also sought to prove the immortality of the soul against the Averroists, in particular Pomponazzi (1462–1525); see Anderson, *The Treatise of the Three Impostors*, pp. 149–50. Bernard de la Monnoye (1641–1728) explicitly stated that Averroes had mocked the three religions (*ibid.*, p. 44).

¹¹ See Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, 'La impiedad averroista. Fray Tomas Scoto: El libro "De tribus impostoribus"', *Boletín Histórico* 1 (1880), pp. 17–23; repr. in *Islamic Philosophy*, vol. 69, *Abu l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198)*, Texts and Studies I, *Ibn Rushd in the Western Tradition*, collected and reprinted by Fuat Sezgin, in collaboration with Mazen Amawi, Carl Ehrig-Eggert, Eckhard Neubauer (Frankfurt am Main: Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1999), pp. 147–54, p. 150.

¹² See Charles Butterworth, 'Averroës, Precursor of the Enlightenment?', *Alif, Journal of Comparative Poetics* 16 (1996): pp. 6–18, p. 7.

commentaries on these works by Aristotle. Thus both the commentaries and the original works will be studied in order to understand what Averroes means by the demonstrative, the dialectical and the rhetorical methods of presenting the truth.

With regard to the development of Averroes' philosophy, an increasing admiration for Aristotle is observable in the way in which Averroes writes with increasing detail on the Stagirite's corpus, from the short to the long commentaries. This tendency is also attested by his gradual abandonment of some Neoplatonic theories, such as emanation as a creation model, and the espousal of a more Aristotelian position, whereby both the celestial and the earthly worlds come to be through final causality rather than efficient causality.

A parallel issue (the difference between religious and philosophical discourse) is observable in the German idealist philosopher Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, a self-confessed Lutheran. Writing at the turn of the nineteenth century, his discussion of the relation between philosophy and religion is informed by his social and religious setting and follows from previous developments in the history of philosophy on the issue. Hegel was writing in a post-Enlightenment, Romantic setting vastly different from that of Averroes, both religiously and historically. While the medieval period had the issue of God at heart, intellectually and philosophically, the Renaissance heralded a period in which man takes centre stage. This shift in focus is observable in the history of philosophy, with the emphasis of Descartes (1596–1650), commonly known as the father of modern philosophy, on the human subject and the ability of the human intellect to know external objects as well as God. This kind of inquiry into the human intellect, the central theme of modern philosophy, would survive into the Romantic period, and even into the contemporary period.

With respect to the relationship between philosophy and religion, the early modern era saw philosophy cease to be a handmaiden of theology as a propaedeutic discipline, paving the way for the study of theology, and regain its autonomy. Within the medieval Islamic context, Islamic philosophy, developed by Muslim philosophers, had not been subordinated to theology, which had a speculative rather than dogmatic character, but neither was it considered as one of the Islamic sciences, or required for their study, as we have seen.

By the eighteenth century, deistic and atheistic trends in European philosophy had emerged and were being openly voiced. Challenges to the hegemony of theology and central Christian dogmas were coming from various quarters, including from non-Christian thinkers such as Spinoza (1632–1677), who was considered a pantheist, due to his identification of God and nature. In the medieval period, some Averroist principles, such as the union of the human intellect with the active intellect, had been considered anathema in Christian circles. Now in the modern period such challenges were becoming more widespread and notorious.

Overt clashes between the respective domains of religion and philosophy, and accusations of impiety on the part of religious or civil authorities against philosophers, which were common in the ancient and in the medieval period did not vanish with the Enlightenment – one need only recall Spinoza's excommunication,

which had been preceded by that of Uriel da Costa in the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam. However, a growing shift of focus from a God-centred to a human-centred inquiry develops, with a rising confidence in human reason to discover truth by itself independently of an external principle, culminating in the Enlightenment's stress on the ability of human reason to discover truth – natural truth by itself, as opposed to religious truth, which relies on authority.

One of the signs of the growing autonomy accorded to human reason by philosophers is the study of religion as an academic subject, with the foundation of the discipline of philosophy of religion – a discipline which would have been inconceivable in the medieval period, given that it presupposes that philosophy judges religion.¹³ The treatment of religion, indeed the various religions, as an academic subject rather than from the point of view of faith and the authority of the Church, would be out of place in the medieval curricula. These developments occurred alongside a common criticism against established religion in Europe, propounded by the various figures of the European Enlightenment. These attacks were not directed only at the Catholic Church or other Christian churches and their hierarchical structures or their relation with temporal powers, but also at the core of Christian doctrine, such as the belief in a transcendent, benevolent and personal God.

At the time of Hegel's formative period, the winds of the French Revolution were making themselves felt in Germany, as well as the influence of the Enlightenment authors. Hegel read Rousseau, Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers as a young man, while pursuing his theological studies in Tübingen. His Protestant background also meant a stress on a personal relation with God rather than relying on authority for matters of faith.

Thus when writing about Christianity and about religion, Hegel's context was quite different from that of Averroes, given that the religious authorities did not have quite the weight accorded to them in the medieval period, whether it be the experts in Islamic law and jurisprudence at the time of Averroes, or the Church authorities in the medieval European period. Nevertheless, Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, delivered at Berlin, show that he had many detractors and had to face charges of pantheism. In 1799, charges of atheism had forced Fichte to leave his teaching post at Jena – which goes to show that the relations between philosophers and the religious and political authorities of the day were not entirely uncomplicated even in a post-Enlightenment setting.

It must nevertheless be emphasised that Hegel received a Lutheran education, having studied theology as well as philosophy at the theological Stift in Tübingen. Religion was a constant theme in his writings. Next to philosophy, he considered

¹³ See Georges Van Riet, 'Le Problème de Dieu chez Hegel', *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 63 (1965): pp. 353–418, p. 374.

religion the highest form of access to the truth. For the young Hegel, in fact, religion is even more important than philosophy.¹⁴

His first writings deal with theological, or rather religious, instead of philosophical themes, and his study of Lutheran Christianity formed his philosophical outlook. Even when discussing philosophy, he ascribed to it a religious quality, speaking for instance of philosophers as a priestly caste.¹⁵ While religion is never far from Averroes' concerns, in Hegel too the boundaries between religion and philosophy are not always easy to discern, for instance in his treatment of concepts such as the Spirit and reconciliation, concepts that play a pivotal role in Hegel's system. The conceptual framework of his writings is charged with religious meanings.¹⁶

The first period of Hegel's writings shows the influence of Kant, in particular in Hegel's *Life of Jesus*, which portrays Jesus as a teacher of morality in a Kantian vein. Later his position with regard to religion changes under the influence of Romanticism, and he defends the idea that religion is a matter of the heart and not a question of dogmatics. Once he decides to devote himself to philosophy, around 1800, he seeks to develop his own system of philosophy, influenced by the two main philosophers of the day, Fichte (1762–1814) and Schelling (1775–1854), who had been his roommate in Tübingen. His first attempts at developing his own system date from the period he spent in Jena in the early 1800s, culminating with the publication of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which served as an introduction to his system and contained his main mature philosophical ideas.

¹⁴ De Nys quotes Hegel to the effect that 'there may be religion without philosophy, but there cannot be philosophy without religion', Martin J. De Nys, *Hegel and Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), p. 2.

¹⁵ See Jacques D'Hondt, 'La Philosophie de la Religion de Hegel', in *Hegel et la Religion*, ed. Guy Planty-Bonjour (Paris: PUF, 1982), p. 16.

¹⁶ Many Hegel scholars, for example in the Marxist tradition, have refused to admit the existence of a truly transcendent element in Hegel's philosophy and in his concept of Spirit, which they consider to be purely human. References to religion are interpreted by these scholars as purely metaphorical and religion as a purely human phenomenon in Hegel, lacking a transcendent foundation. In Averroes, a certain modern interpretation has stressed the political dimension of his philosophy to the detriment of the purely religious in its own right – in other words, Averroes and other medieval Muslim philosophers conceived of religion as a means to structure the Islamic state, rather than as an end in itself. See Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 10. However, in the *Decisive Treatise*, Averroes explicitly rejects this conception of religion. Hegel also explicitly says that in discussing the Spirit, he means the Holy Spirit, as we shall see. Although Averroes' and Hegel's approaches to Islam and Christianity respectively were considered unorthodox, Hegel's views for instance being seen as pantheistic, it is difficult to discern a dichotomy between exoteric (to please the authorities) and esoteric (their true) positions, a dichotomy that is explicitly laid out in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* and used by Leo Strauss as a blueprint for interpreting the whole medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophical tradition.

As we have seen, it is in the *Phenomenology*, which treats the various forms of knowledge and consciousness, as well as philosophical and intellectual movements throughout history, that he compares in great detail religion and philosophy and distinguishes between a religious mode of apprehension, which relies on representation or picture-thinking, and a philosophical method, which uses conceptual thinking. Hegel claims that philosophy and religion represent the same substance but in different ways. Philosophy uses pure concept or notion (*Begriff*), in which the form is entirely adequate to the content conveyed, while religion uses representation (*Vorstellung*), which appears to be a lower stage of knowledge or consciousness.

Representation is associated with several religions including Christianity, which, although ranking as the highest form of religion, still contains pictorial elements (such as the idea of ‘father’ and ‘son’, which need to be further spiritualised by philosophy). This comparison between philosophy and religion sets the tone for Hegel’s later approach to religion and constitutes the core of his philosophy of religion.

His controversial approach did not go unnoticed. In spite of his tendency to treat theological or religious issues, from his early studies to his mature career, he was not considered an orthodox Lutheran theologian by all, and he clashed with the leading Lutheran theologians of the day, especially with Friedrich Schleiermacher, who stressed the emotional aspect of Christianity. On the one hand, Hegel emphasised the intersection between philosophy and religion, and the role of reason in explaining Christian doctrines, as attested by his admiration for medieval Christian philosophy and theology, in particular that of St Anselm. On the other hand, he believed that Christian dogmas could be better understood as explained by philosophy than by theology, which meant that his position was neither typically Lutheran nor Catholic, and indeed not conventionally Christian by any measure. Therefore, the reception of his writings was polemical, with some scholars defending his orthodoxy and others attacking him, to the point that Hegel was plagued by accusations of atheism and pantheism throughout his tenure of the chair of philosophy in Berlin in the 1820s and until his death in 1831.¹⁷

The debate was prolonged after his death by his followers, who held vastly different views on the religious legacy of Hegel’s writings. Hegel’s immediate admirers and interpreters were split into Right and Left Hegelians.¹⁸ The former

¹⁷ See Laurence Dickey, ‘Hegel on Religion and Philosophy’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 301–47, p. 313.

¹⁸ ‘Broadly speaking the Right composed all who interpreted the Hegelian logic theistically: Hegel himself, they claimed, had believed in a personal God and in immortality, and indeed had regarded himself as a good Lutheran. ... Thus basically the Right and Left wings of Hegelianism divide on the meaning of the Absolute. The former interpret the Idea in terms of a transcendent divine Spirit, the God of Christian theism; whereas for the latter it is simply an abstraction, a “principle” the existence of which is realised only in the order

defended his orthodoxy, and are usually identified with the Old Hegelians, while the latter dismissed any religious element in Hegel, a position taken by the most radical Left Hegelians. Left Hegelians such as Marx would divest Hegel's philosophical system of any supernatural element. This complex legacy attests to the complexity and even ambiguity of Hegel's treatment of religion.

A parallelism between Averroes and Hegel can thus be discerned, although the first seeks to reconcile philosophy and Islam, and the latter philosophy and Christianity. Both Averroes' and Hegel's approaches to religion in general and specifically Islam and Christianity were controversial in their own times and afterwards.¹⁹

This similarity does not rely on historical proximity, as we have seen, or transmission. Except for the purported influence of Averroism on the development of humanism and the Enlightenment in its confidence in human reason, the historical link between the two philosophers is tenuous, and a link between them is loosened by their different religious allegiances, Averroes as a Sunni Muslim, and Hegel as a Lutheran Christian. Yet a parallelism exists in their handling of religion and their analyses of the relation between religion and philosophy. This affinity can partly be explained by the fact that both were philosophers with a keen interest in religion, trying to explicate the relation between the two disciplines in such a way that philosophy did not come out the loser.

The medieval and modern period equated Averroism with a rationalism that excluded religion. The question of his sincerity in religious matters is still fiercely debated in modern Averroes scholarship. Some scholars believe that his true views are encapsulated in the commentaries on Aristotle's works, which they say are not easily reconcilable with the Qur'anic worldview. Other scholars believe

of nature and which is apprehended as such by the human intelligence. In the case of the extreme Left this implies a purely naturalistic or materialistic view of reality', Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 136–7.

¹⁹ The issue of Hegel's position on philosophy and religion and the medieval controversy over the double truth is commented on by one Hegel scholar as follows: 'Thus the question the student of Hegel's religious philosophy is bound to ask himself is whether he is not being invited to admit a double standard of truth whereby what is acceptable enough in theology can and needs to be explained away in philosophy. The notion of such a double standard was of course by no means novelty, having been taught – or so their critics objected – by the Averroist Siger of Brabant and his followers in the thirteenth century. Yet we may be sure that Hegel himself would have denied maintaining anything of the sort: truth for him, as for any rational man, was and could only be one ... what Hegel repeatedly says (or consistently implies) when he distinguishes the *Begriff* from the *Vorstellung*, the idea "in and for itself" from the mere mental picture (or ideas which still retain a pictorial element within them) – between what in fact can be readily grasped by all men and what is comprehensible only to the understanding few – certainly leaves the reader with the impression that the truth is capable of being presented in ways so diverse that one statement of it can be virtually negated by another. That Hegel himself regarded the conceptual rendering as superior to the merely representational is of the very essence of his doctrine', Reardon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 116–17.

that Averroes expressed his true views also or especially in his more personal or original works, in which an attempt to reconcile Aristotle and Islam is at work.

Similarly, Hegel scholarship has debated Hegel's position with regard to religion. Some have looked to his work for a discriminatory comparison between the two disciplines, philosophy and religion, debating whether, as a philosopher, he prefers philosophy to the detriment of religion; in other words, whether he considers religion as an inferior discipline, subordinate to philosophy, the more scientific and accurate of the two.²⁰ The issue of representation has been studied in detail, but a study of religious representation contrasted with conceptual thinking, deserves a detailed treatment and will be the focus of the chapters on Hegel in this study.

The relationship and articulation between the respective domains of philosophy and religion can be studied in various philosophical traditions throughout history as a recurring theme, and the works of Hegel and Averroes are particularly illustrative of an attempt to articulate the two disciplines.

Chapter 1 of this book takes Averroes' *Decisive Treatise* as its starting point. In this work Averroes states that the religious and the philosophical message are at bottom one and the same. On this assumption, religion and philosophy present the truth in different ways but share the same content. For him, the text which contains religious truth is the Qur'an, rather than Aristotle, who addresses primarily the philosophers and draws a specific, limited audience. The Qur'an is directed at everyone, including Muslim theologians and philosophers. Averroes states that the Qur'an contains three ways of producing belief or faith in three corresponding classes of people: demonstrative, dialectical and rhetorical (or, respectively, the philosophers, the speculative theologians of Islam, and the majority of people). What is the exact difference between these three kinds of discourse? The answer to this question will be sought in the commentaries on Aristotle's works. This chapter also studies the interpretation of religious texts by Averroes. When it comes to his approach to the philosophical versus the religious sources and texts, while the Qur'an is a much more comprehensive text than Aristotle's works, the philosopher decides how the Qur'an is to be interpreted. If no disagreement is to

²⁰ The question of Hegel's understanding of religion as relying primarily on representation is a theme debated already by Hegel's own students in Berlin, in particular the Young Hegelians; see *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology*, Introduced and Edited by Lawrence S. Stepelevich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 6–7. For more recent interpretations of Hegel's position as amounting to a subordination of religion to philosophy, see, for instance, Chapter 2 of William Desmond, *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), in particular pp. 67–70; Patricia Marie Carlton, *Hegel's Metaphysics of God: The Ontological Proof as the Development of a Trinitarian Divine Ontology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 112; or Jacques D'Hondt, 'La Philosophie de la Religion de Hegel', p. 15. According to Jamros, 'Philosophy ranks higher than religion, claims Hegel, because it comprehends what religion merely believes', Daniel P. Jamros, S.J., *The Human Shape of God: Religion in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Paragon House, 1994), p. 1. We shall see, however, that religion is not merely grounded in belief but entails a cognitive content.

be found between the Qur'an and Aristotle, the Qur'an is to be taken literally. If any disagreement becomes apparent, then the Qur'anic verses in question ought to be metaphorically interpreted. For the question of religious interpretation another work will be studied, namely *Kashf 'an-manāḥij al-adilla fi 'aqā'id al-milla* (*Uncovering the Methods of Proofs concerning the Beliefs of the religious Community*). Averroes' commitment to the defence of an Islamic point of view is further buttressed by his defence of the superiority of Islam in relation to other religions.

Chapter 2 deals with Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, which treats of scientific discourse, laying out the conditions for the obtention of irrefutable demonstration (the tool used by philosophers in their argumentation and reasoning). These commentaries represent a wealth of materials hitherto little explored, which will shed light on Averroes' understanding of the various types of assent or belief, in particular demonstrative assent. These works will help to elucidate Averroes' understanding of demonstration as a specifically philosophical mode of assent in contrast to dialectic and rhetoric.

In Chapter 3 I will study Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle's *Topics* and *Rhetoric*, which deal respectively with dialectic and rhetoric, a discipline aiming at persuading most people for the most part. As we shall see, Averroes understands the disciplines of dialectic and rhetoric in a religious as well as a philosophical sense, and identifies the dialectical class with the theologians of his time, the *mutakallimūn*. Equally, while rhetoric has a certain political use in Aristotle, as it was bound up with the various political systems of his day, Averroes understands it in the context of Islamic law and courts and as a useful political and religious weapon in bringing about assent to religious principles by the majority of people. For him, religion is an individual matter when it comes to the acceptance of the divine message, but it has a political significance for bringing about political cohesion and stability.

Chapter 4 marks the beginning of this study's treatment of Hegel. In it the young Hegel's attitude towards religion is analysed. The young Hegel is sceptical of a dogmatic understanding of Christianity and prefers to focus on Jesus as a model of perfect morals. A second period within this early approach is marked by a Romantic influence, whereby religion becomes an affair of the heart, and a means of educating the majority of people in matters of morality. In this early period Hegel had not yet developed his own philosophical system, nor had he developed the distinction between representation and conceptual thinking as the respective modes of apprehension in religion and in philosophy.

Chapter 5 studies the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, with a focus on its treatment of religion as opposed to philosophy and the differences between representational thinking and conceptual thinking. The question of representation is analysed in connection with faith, and also with specific religions, in particular Christianity. This chapter also deals with absolute knowledge as a symbol for philosophical thinking, which uses concept rather than representation.

Chapter 6 analyses Hegel's understanding of representation versus conceptual thinking, in the Berlin lectures on the philosophy of religion and on the history of

philosophy. Religion, defined by Hegel in the *Phenomenology* as self-consciousness of absolute being, is on a level with philosophy. Conversely, philosophy is understood as God's thinking of himself. Hegel went on to state unambiguously in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* that the Spirit, the summit of his philosophical system, is God, which lends a theological colour to his metaphysics and epistemology. However, the assumption remains that philosophy represents the height of human scientific achievement, rather than religion, which employs representation, a mode of thinking which is more dependent on the historical, the contingent and the material than conceptual thinking, which is purely spiritual and universal. This chapter will also examine Hegel's position on the central role of Christianity within philosophy and his position on other religions, especially Islam. One of the important points to be addressed is the absence of a specific chapter on Islam in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, which, although consisting of only a few pages, is extant in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Hegel's understanding of Christianity in the context of the debate over the relation between philosophy and religion will also be highlighted in this chapter. The later Hegel is much more theologically inclined and offers detailed reflections on the Trinity and the Incarnation, the two main Christian dogmas. It remains to be seen if an ambiguity towards religion and Christianity remains.

The focal point for the present study on Averroes and Hegel is the concept of the different registers, discourses or methods used in philosophy and religion respectively. Both Averroes and Hegel believed that philosophy and religion each had its own specific domain and means of expression, although they conveyed the same message.

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Chapter 1

The *Decisive Treatise*: A Project for the Harmony between Philosophy and Religion

The *Decisive Treatise* is arguably, in modern scholarship on Islamic philosophy, Averroes' most famous and most studied work. Since it considers specifically the relation between philosophy and Islam, a theme which guided Averroes' philosophical project, it will be the starting point of our analysis. This remains a much-debated work, as regards both content and style. While some scholars have stressed its intended aim of demonstrating the harmony between philosophy and religion, in particular the compatibility between Aristotle's philosophy and Islamic religion and precepts, others have argued that this is a legal document in the form of a *fatwa* (furnishing a legal opinion), advocating the permissibility of studying philosophy (*falsafa*, originally a Greek discipline) and conducting philosophical investigations within an Islamic framework.¹ Arguments have been put forward in

¹ Averroes, *Le livre du discours décisif*, Introduction par Alain de Libera. Traduction inédite, notes et dossier par Marc Geoffroy (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), Introduction, p. 11. Other scholars defend an alternative translation of this work. El Ghannouchi proposes – instead of 'The Decisive Treatise on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy', which he states was first proposed by Léon Gauthier – 'Distinction of the Religious Discourse from the Philosophical Discourse', in A. El Ghannouchi, 'Distinction et relation des discours philosophique et religieux chez Ibn Rushd: Faṣl al-maqāl ou la double vérité', in *Averroes (1126–1198), oder, der Triumph des Rationalismus: internationales Symposium anlässlich des 800. Todestages des islamischen Philosophen, Heidelberg, 7.–11. Oktober 1998*, ed. Raif Georges Khoury (Heidelberg: Winter, 2002), pp. 139–45, p. 140. In this article El Ghannouchi defends the idea that Averroes upheld a double truth theory (as a precursor of the Enlightenment, by emphasising the power of human reason), and not a harmony or reconciliation between religion and philosophy. Richard Taylor proposes, after El Ghannouchi, that the title be translated as 'The Book of the Distinction of Discourse and the Establishment of the Connection between the Religious Law and Philosophy', in Richard C. Taylor, 'Averroes on the Sharī'ah of the Philosophers', in *The Judeo-Christian-Muslim Heritage: Philosophical & Theological Perspectives*, ed. Richard C. Taylor and Irfan A. Omar (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2012), pp. 283–304, pp. 285–6. George F. Hourani provides a literal translation of the title as 'The Book of the Decision (or Distinction) of the Discourse, and a Determination of What There is of Connection between Religion and Philosophy', in *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*. A translation, with introduction and notes, of Ibn Rushd's *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl*, with its appendix (*Damīma*) and an extract from *Kitāb al-kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla* (London: Luzac, 1976), p. 1. In turn, Butterworth translates the title as 'The Book of the Decisive Treatise Determining the Connection between the Law and Wisdom', in Averroës, *Decisive Treatise & Epistle Dedicatory*,

favour of labelling this work either a philosophical or a legal document. The full title of the work reads *The Book of the Decisive Discourse/Treatise establishing the Connection between Religious Law/Religion and Wisdom/Philosophy*. This connection, as one realises in reading the *Decisive Treatise*, addresses two questions: What is the status of the study of philosophy according to Islamic law? And what is the connection between the message of the Qur'an and Aristotelian philosophy? These two aspects thus complement each other, and both characterise Averroes' intention in composing the book. The study of philosophy is set against the background of Islamic law whereby each action is judged according to five categories: obligatory, recommended, permissible, blameworthy or forbidden. Averroes speaks here clearly as a jurist and draws from his vast legal erudition, using a language which highlights the legal aspect of the work. This is not to say that the question of a possible compatibility between philosophy and the literal text of the Qur'an is not raised. For example, the issue of the creation of the world is addressed. If most theologians have considered the Qur'an to state that the world was created in time by God through his will and omnipotence, how is this reconcilable with Aristotle's explicit affirmation in the *Physics* that the world, although spatially finite, has always existed and always will? Many studies have been devoted to this work, so it would be superfluous to provide a full synopsis here, but some of the main points made by Averroes are worth highlighting before proceeding to the differences between religious and philosophical language.

Let us then examine the various ways in which philosophy and religion converge, and whether Averroes' exposition achieves its intended goal. After analysing the *Decisive Treatise*, we will compare it to his commentaries to check for congruence or any discrepancies.

First, it is important to address the similarities and differences between philosophy and Islamic law, and, more broadly, Islamic religion. This work is clearly addressed to a Muslim audience.² Although the study of philosophy is foremost in his mind, the author draws on the Qur'an for corroboration of his statements, or the Sunna, the body of religious tradition in Islam, which includes the sayings and deeds of Muhammad. The positions taken are thus verified according to their consonance with the Qur'an or the Islamic tradition.

Subsequently the connection between philosophy and religion will be analysed in terms of content and ideas, and checked against the positions of Greek and Hellenistic philosophers and their Muslim followers on specific points such as

translation, with introduction and notes, by Charles E. Butterworth (Provo: Brigham University Press, 2001). Hourani remarks that a Hebrew translation of this work was made in the late thirteenth or the early fourteenth century, but a Latin translation was apparently never made; Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, p. 41.

² Avital Wohlman argues that the work was specifically addressed to the political leaders of al-Andalus, the Almohads, in *Al-Ghazali, Averroës and the Interpretation of the Qur'an: Common Sense and Philosophy in Islam*, trans. David Burrell (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 50.

the creation of the world and God's nature. In this context, the charges of impiety levelled by al-Ghazzali against the philosophers and philosophy as an un-Islamic discipline must be also taken into account.

From a legal point of view, and with regard to the category into which the study of philosophy falls, Averroes argues that a Muslim who is intellectually gifted for philosophy and morally upright and religious not only is allowed, but has a duty, to study the sciences of the Ancients, in particular philosophy, with its various disciplines from logic to physics and metaphysics.³ Thus the study of philosophy is not just useful and certainly not to be condemned, but is in fact binding on certain Muslims. The obligation to study philosophy is drawn from Qur'anic verses to the effect that God commands believers to reflect on Creation (88:17–20) insofar as it reflects the Creator's glory and omnipotence. According to Averroes, the study of philosophy is binding on some precisely because philosophy consists in the reflection on the world as made by God and so in the study of God's attributes. The significance of philosophy is based on our capacity as human beings to understand the Creation and, to some extent, God's nature. Studying philosophy, then, is not merely a reflection on existence, but primarily a reflection on God and his works, and hence a direct or indirect contemplation of God.

The Andalusian philosopher answers potential objections to the study of philosophy. For instance, philosophy could be detrimental to those who study it. In particular, this discipline stands accused of fostering irreligion and immorality, leading its adherents astray. Averroes rebuts this charge by stressing that philosophy is beneficial for most who study it, and only accidentally leads to their moral and religious downfall. In this respect it is no different from jurisprudence (*fiqh*), an indisputably Islamic discipline.⁴ In fact, not to engage in this kind of enquiry and grasp God in a philosophical and spiritual (that is, non-anthropomorphic) way may lead to irreligion and unbelief in this group of people. The three different ways of believing in God are laid out by Averroes in the *Decisive Treatise* and will be explained later when the distinction between the three different classes of people is expounded.

Another objection against philosophy is that it did not exist when Islam originated in the Arabian Peninsula, with the underlying assumption that it is a foreign and un-Islamic discipline, unlike, for instance, jurisprudence and other Islamic sciences that are directly anchored in the interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunna rather than the works of the ancient Greeks. Averroes replies to this objection to the effect that neither did jurisprudence exist at the birth of Islam but was developed later, with the implication that it would not have been known to Muhammad and his companions. This, however, would not obviate the charge that philosophy, born in ancient Greece, has its roots in the books of the Ancients rather than the sources of Islamic religion. Averroes stresses that the main Islamic disciplines did not exist at the time of Muhammad, including Qur'anic exegesis

³ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 6.

⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

and the occasions of revelation; therefore this constitutes no obstacle to the study and practice of philosophy. Addressing the charge that the content of philosophical works goes against the explicit text of the Qur'an, Averroes begins by replying that one must read the Ancients' books with a critical eye with a view to discerning if it, and what in it is truly against religion. He will later explain the way in which philosophy does not contradict the Qur'an.

The parallelism between philosophy and jurisprudence is worth considering. We have seen that Averroes was both a philosopher and a noted jurist, having authored his own manual of Islamic law under the title of *Bidāyat al-mujtahid* (translated into English as *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer*).⁵ He compares both disciplines in various ways, and seeks to legitimise philosophy through their similarities. He illustrates the commonalities between jurisprudence and philosophy by drawing on a polysemic Arabic term, *qiyās*, which is used in both disciplines. In the context of Islamic law, *qiyās* is translated as 'analogy' and consists in the method whereby a judge decides on a new case on the basis of previous, similar cases. In the context of philosophy, it translates as 'syllogism', the Aristotelian type of logical reasoning which consists of two premisses and a conclusion, in which the premisses are better known than, and lead to, the conclusion (for instance: 'All humans are mortal; all philosophers are human(s); therefore all philosophers are mortal'). Thus in both cases, analogy or syllogism, one can draw the unknown from the known, constituting an invaluable tool for the expansion of knowledge. In drawing on these two meanings of *qiyās*, Averroes implicitly argues that philosophy is just as legitimately Islamic as jurisprudence, given that legal analogy was developed sometime after the birth of Islam. Averroes argues that since analogy was a later development aimed at expanding our knowledge of jurisprudence, the use of syllogistic logic to expand our knowledge of Creation and the Creator is all the more appropriate.⁶ In this way is the study of philosophy legitimised as useful and profitable, being in fact worthier than jurisprudence, for it does not just study human action but all existents.

According to Averroes, religion teaches true knowledge and true practice. The former comprises the theoretical sphere, such as the knowledge of God, Creation and the afterlife, and could be said to overlap with philosophy in spite of being arguably more comprehensive than philosophy, as we shall see. Religion also comprises true practice, which leads to true happiness and includes the outward actions, regulated by jurisprudence, and asceticism, which regards the actions of the soul.⁷ Both are necessary for the achievement of eternal bliss, but Averroes' preference for theory may stem from Aristotle's appraisal of the theoretical sciences as ranking above the practical ones. Man is a political animal, but he

⁵ Averroes/Ibn Rushd, *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer: A Translation of Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*, trans. Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee, reviewed by Mohammad Abdul Rauf, Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization, 2 vols, New Edition (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 2000).

⁶ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

is more essentially a rational animal. The contemplative life is more valuable still than the practical life, and contemplation is that which characterises divine activity, as stated by the Stagirite.⁸

A striking point separating theory from practice is the existence of a consensus (*ijmā'*) of the learned community of Muslims, the ulema (*'ulamā'*), which is binding on practical matters, as opposed to the lack of consensus regarding matters of theory. Averroes states that in order for any theoretical position to be condemned (or approved) it must be submitted to the ulema for approval on the basis of a consensus. While that consensus can be established regarding the specific aspects of religious practice, no such consensus is available in matters of theory. For a consensus to be formed, all the scholars involved in deciding on a given issue at a particular time must be known, but that consensus cannot be traced back with regard to theoretical issues.⁹ Therefore Averroes concludes that no specific philosophical theory can be condemned as heretical by any Muslim with certainty, as al-Ghazzali had misguidedly attempted. This point shows the greater emphasis laid on orthopraxy than orthodoxy in Islam, and for Averroes allows the possibility of philosophical debate and the acceptance of Aristotle's theories concerning the natural and the celestial world.¹⁰

Although any obstacles to the study of Greek philosophy by Muslims have thus been removed, one must still be guided by religious principles in studying such works. These must be studied discriminately and critically, and one should accept only that which conforms to religion while rejecting that which is opposed to it.

Having proved that according to Islamic law the study of philosophy is incumbent on some Muslims, Averroes goes on to discuss the particular issues on which, according to al-Ghazzali, philosophy goes against religion. The main

⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, rev. J.O. Urmson, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 1729–867, 1179a, p. 1863.

⁹ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 11. 'Complete unanimity cannot be attained for it would impossibly require (i) a limitation to a certain period of time, (ii) full and individual knowledge of the opinion of each and every scholar, (iii) absolute assurance in the chain of transmission of the opinion, (iv) certainty that it was never held that the text is incapable of both literal and allegorical interpretations, (v) knowledge that no secret interpretations were kept by any scholar, and (vi) full agreement by all on one and only one interpretation of the text. Given these criteria, consensus adequate to contend with demonstrative certainty cannot be reached', in Richard C. Taylor, 'Averroes on the Sharī'ah of the Philosophers', p. 289.

¹⁰ As Fakhry states, 'Two circumstances in particular enabled Averroes to maintain the difficult position which we have labelled the parity of philosophy and scripture, of reason and revelation: first, the distinction, which the Koran itself (Koran, 3, 5) makes and which the commentators from al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) down had recognized between ambiguous (*mutashābih*) and unambiguous (*muḥkam*) scriptural passages; and second, the absence of a teaching authority in (Sunni) Islam upon which devolved the right to define doctrine', Majid Fakhry, 'Philosophy and Scripture in the Theology of Averroes', *Medieval Studies* 30 (1968): pp. 78–89, p. 82.

work in which Averroes counters al-Ghazzali's criticism point by point is the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, consisting of sixteen questions on metaphysics and four questions on the natural sciences, for a total of twenty questions.¹¹ In the *Decisive Treatise*, a short, programmatic work, he does not discuss all these issues, but stresses three that laid Islamic philosophers open to the charge of impiety (*kufir*). These consist of the eternity of the world, God's knowledge of particulars, and bodily resurrection, in other words: the philosophers' defence of the eternity of the world, of God's ignorance of individual things or persons, and of the theory that only the soul, but not the body, survives death. Averroes' exposition of these issues in the *Decisive Treatise* illustrates his method of interpreting the Qur'an with a view to showing the congruity between philosophy and religion.

As for the creation of the world, Averroes claims that the Qur'an explicitly points to the existence of something together with God before the creation of the world, such as God's throne and the waters on which he stood before the start of creation properly speaking. This indicates that there was never a point in time when God was alone in existence. While Averroes takes pains not to contradict the Qur'anic account of Creation, he argues that it is at bottom not incompatible with Aristotle's proof for the eternity of the world expounded in the *Physics*. The Stagirite argues that the world must be eternal, never having come into existence at a point in time and never ceasing to exist, on account of the activity of the Prime Mover, which Averroes identifies with God. In Aristotle's contention, everything that is active or actual must be rendered actual, and drawn from a state of potentiality to actuality, through something that is actual and possesses the quality that it actualises in the other. For instance, something can only be rendered white by something – its cause – which in some way possesses whiteness. Aristotle further claims that actuality ultimately precedes potentiality, meaning that the first principle of everything must be something which is permanently actual. Therefore, the Prime Mover is the first cause of all motion, an action which produces the passage from potentiality to actuality, and hence existence. The first cause of the world can be said to create by setting in motion. Moreover, the Prime Mover's permanent actuality translates into a permanent activity and therefore an eternal world, which, Averroes defends, is an eternal creation. Against the Muslim theologians' argument for a creation out of nothing at a specific moment, Averroes defends an eternal, permanent creation. The Prime Mover's setting in motion constitutes the creation process, because nothing exists without being drawn from potentiality to actuality. This must be done at one time, in an eternal act. If God had been idle at any point in time, his omnipotence would have been compromised. Although his arguments for the eternity of the world are provided in the commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics* and the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, the *Decisive Treatise* explains why this position is compatible with a legitimate

¹¹ Averroes, *Averroes' Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), trans. from the Arabic with introduction and notes by Simon van den Bergh, Gibb Memorial Trust, 2 vols (London: Luzac & Co., 1954).

interpretation of the Qur'an. Before studying Averroes' rules for the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the Qur'an, let us mention briefly the other two issues that earned the philosophers the accusation of impiety (*takfīr*).

Regarding God's knowledge of particulars, Averroes purports to follow the Qur'an, which expresses unambiguously that God knows every single existing thing.¹² This implies not just an awareness of ideas or universals, such as the essence of 'human being', but a knowledge of individual human beings. Avicenna had stated that God knows particulars, that is, individual things, insofar as he knows universals. In other words, he knows, for instance, the individual horse in so far as it bears the characteristics of any horse. However, al-Ghazzali argued that this was tantamount to denying God's knowledge of particulars, since one may know the general idea of 'horse' without knowing any particular horse. Averroes restates the problem by arguing that God's knowledge cannot be described as universal or particular, since these categories describe only the process of human knowledge. Particular knowledge is obtained by us through sense experience, and universal knowledge follows upon the previous through abstraction of the common features of particulars. But one cannot claim that God knows through a process, since everything is known to him immediately and with all certainty. Although we cannot grasp the exact mode of God's knowledge, we must assume that he knows all particulars, although his knowledge is neither universal nor particular. In his approach to this question, Averroes clearly acknowledges the ineffability of the divine and distinguishes divine from human knowledge, which bears a pale resemblance to the former. In this context, Averroes sets limits to the capabilities of human reason, when it comes to knowing God's nature.

The third issue concerning which al-Ghazzali accused the philosophers, in particular Avicenna, of impiety, was bodily resurrection, which they had failed clearly to uphold. The Qur'an describes heaven in explicit terms with the underlying assumption of the resurrection of the body (56:28–33).

Among the essential tenets of Islam, according to Averroes, is the afterlife, together with the existence of God and the prophets. A Muslim who departs from these three tenets should indeed be charged with unbelief.¹³ In stating this, he does not specify how happiness or wretchedness are to be understood in the Hereafter, and he refers the reader to other works. The Qur'anic verses dealing with the Hereafter are not to be taken in their apparent sense, that is to say, literally. However, this does not mean that one should deny the Hereafter. In the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* he returns to this issue and does not explicitly advocate the resurrection of the body; he speaks of the different modes of conceiving the Hereafter and human immortality, which he does not question, since it remains an essential tenet of Islamic doctrine. He does praise, however, the Islamic understanding of the afterlife as it features in the Qur'an, explicitly

¹² For a detailed treatment of this issue in Averroes, see my 'Averroes on God's Knowledge of Particulars', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17:2 (2006): pp. 177–99.

¹³ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 18.

and vividly illustrated. The implication is that this type of representation of the Hereafter is much more conducive to the practice of religion in this world, than for instance the immaterial depiction of Heaven in Christianity.¹⁴ The immortality of the soul is upheld here, but Averroes seems to skirt the issue of bodily resurrection in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*. Later, in the *Long Commentary on De anima*, he famously only admits the survival of the intellective part of the soul, to the exclusion of the imagination and other parts of the soul that are attached to the body. Moreover, the individual soul does not retain its individuality, since it is no longer attached to the body, its individuating principle.¹⁵

The solution to all three questions is underpinned by an attempt to explain away any anthropomorphic characteristics of God. His will is unlike the human will, and consequently does not change; therefore, God could not have at one point decided to create the world, having delayed his decision to create. And because there can be no delay in God's will between his decision and the coming to be of its desired purpose, the world had to exist from all eternity. Equally, God's knowledge is unlike ours, insofar as it is infinite and is not universal or particular. Nor can it be said that there is a process of God's knowledge, for he knows everything at once. Finally, the nature of the heavenly realm is in effect so completely devoid of matter that no material element is admitted in it. In addition to the differences in the interpretation of the Qur'an there were other points of friction between Averroes and the Ash'arite theologians and al-Ghazzali. For instance, the philosophers denied the divine attributes of sight and hearing, because they were too tied up with the material world we inhabit, since they are responsible for sense perception, which includes material objects. Moreover, God does not need any faculties in order to have absolute knowledge. The Qur'an was interpreted by the philosophers in a metaphorical way, especially the passages where God assumes human characteristics.

Philosophical Interpretation of the Religious Text

With regard to Qur'anic interpretation, Averroes first stipulates general principles, to smooth over the discrepancies between philosophical and religious texts, and later establishes the acceptable rules for the interpretation of the Qur'anic text.

If religion does not mention something already stated by philosophers, no conflict ensues. If the religious text does mention it, it either agrees with philosophy (or 'demonstration') or it does not. If it agrees, there is no contradiction. If it does not agree, then the religious text must be metaphorically interpreted.¹⁶ It would

¹⁴ Averroes, *Averroes' Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, vol. I, p. 361.

¹⁵ Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 335–8.

¹⁶ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 9.

seem that the philosophical text, literally accepted, is the yardstick by which religious discourse must be gauged, with the implication that philosophy would be used to interpret the Qur'an, and the latter would have to conform to the explicit sayings of the ancient philosophers, especially Aristotle. However, one should not draw a strict analogy between the philosophical text and the religious text. While the former may contain truth expressed in a rigorous way, the latter addresses not just the philosophers but every single human being, and is therefore much broader in scope and addresses a much wider audience. Some of its verses do not require interpretation but can be taken in their apparent sense if in line with the philosophical text. Before turning to the different types of assent to the religious message, let us look into other aspects of religious exegesis. Averroes approaches the issue of religious interpretation primarily in the *Decisive Treatise* and in *Uncovering the Methods*, in ways that complement each other.¹⁷

It is important to stress that there had been a consensus among Muslim scholars, to which Averroes alludes in the *Decisive Treatise*, that not all the Qur'anic verses and religious literature were to be interpreted literally, especially when involving a reference to God that was anthropomorphic. Among the four theological schools that he mentions in *Uncovering the Methods*, two are primarily concerned with the issue of interpretation of sacred texts, such as the esoteric (Batinis) and the literalist (Zahiris). The latter, the literalists, accept only the apparent, literal meaning of the Qur'an, and do not believe in the use of reason in order to believe in God's existence. For their part, the esoterics accept, as their name indicates, hidden meanings in the Qur'an.¹⁸ The other two schools mentioned in this context, the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites, are known to be at odds regarding the interpretation of the Qur'an, with the Mu'tazilites taking a more liberal approach. That is not to say that the Ash'arites rejected all forms of metaphorical interpretation. Ironically, Averroes charges them with resorting to metaphorical interpretation when reading the passages relating the creation of the world, ignoring the references to the throne and the water which existed with God before his decision to create the world. This indicates that the question of whether to interpret the Qur'an is not at stake; the issue is which verses to interpret and how to interpret them:

Muslims have formed a consensus that it is not obligatory for all the utterances of the Law to be taken in their apparent sense, nor for all of them to be drawn out from their apparent sense by means of interpretation, though they disagree about which ones are to be interpreted and which are not.¹⁹

¹⁷ Averroes/Ibn Rushd, *Al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla fi aqā'id al-milla*, edited with an introduction and analysis by Muhammad 'A. al-Jābirī (Beirut: al-Tab'at al-ūlā, 1998), (*Uncovering the Methods*); translated into English in Averroes, *Faith and Reason in Islam: Averroes' Exposition of Religious Arguments*, translated with footnotes, index and bibliography by Ibrahim I. Najjar, with an introduction by Majid Fakhry (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001).

¹⁸ Averroes, *Faith and Reason in Islam*, p. 17.

¹⁹ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 10.

In addition, certain rules must be observed in order to obtain a valid reading. Averroes thus states that one must follow the rules of interpretation. He defines interpretation thus:

The meaning of interpretation is: drawing out the figurative significance of an utterance from its true significance without violating the custom of the Arabic language with respect to figurative speech in doing so – such as calling a thing by what resembles it, its cause, its consequence, what compares to it, or another of the things enumerated in making the sorts of figurative discourse cognizable.²⁰

This passage presents the precise rules for interpretation of a religious text, including the Qur'an, but does in fact allow a great interpretative freedom, in particular with regard to the metaphorical reading of the text. Instead of taking references to God and the divine kingdom as literal, such as his hand, these guidelines allow Muslim philosophers to do precisely what it takes in order to harmonise the letter of the Islamic text with philosophical conceptions of God, such as the Prime Mover or an infinite being that is pure thought thinking itself, or the absolute One and indivisible, with all his attributes. To illustrate this point, one could take the famous example of God's hand to signify his power and omnipotence. Since the hand is a limb which enables one to carry out an action, as the cause of that action (according to the above stipulation mentioning a causal connection as warranting figurative interpretation), then the link between the hand and power is established. Since all attributes in God are infinite, such as knowledge, wisdom and power, references to his hand can be taken to signify his omnipotence. The interpretation of Islamic texts can thus be made to conform to philosophical ideas, in this case Aristotle's theory of causality. Averroes even admits the possibility of error in interpreting religious texts. Since there is no consensus on theoretical matters, unlike practical consensus, the effort of one judging such difficult issues should be excused while one who produces a correct interpretation should receive a reward. In fact, Averroes states that the effort itself, even if the result is erroneous, should be rewarded, and the successful effort of a judge in interpreting these difficult texts should receive a double reward, following a *hadith* quoted by Averroes. If a judge in practical matters always receives a reward for his efforts, regardless of their rectitude, the judge of theoretical matters, that is to say, the philosopher, should *a fortiori* be rewarded for his efforts. One is here reminded of the different and sometimes contradictory philosophical theories circulated even in Antiquity. For example, Plato, unlike Aristotle in Averroes' interpretation, held that the world had a beginning in time. Averroes thus admits the diversity of philosophical opinions although he eventually tends to side with Aristotle on all major issues. When a literal interpretation of religious texts is impossible because it would involve a contradiction with other passages and with what one holds the immaterial nature

²⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

of God to be, one can and should draw from philosophical literature, in order to fill an existing interpretative gap.

Metaphorical interpretation of religious texts was not introduced by Muslim philosophers, for the Mu'tazilites had already advocated an open interpretation of the Qur'an to maintain their spiritual rather than material understanding of God. However, their task was not quite as complicated as that of the philosophers who not only advocated a purely spiritual, incorporeal understanding of God, but had set themselves the added task of integrating the Greek philosophical tradition into Islamic doctrine, thus facing a more complex goal. While the Mu'tazilites were more obviously working within a purely Islamic framework, the philosophers were accused of introducing and fostering what was essentially a pagan and foreign discipline.

In addition to stipulating general rules for the interpretation of religious texts in the *Decisive Treatise*, he expands on the same subject in *Uncovering the Methods*, a work that aims at complementing the *Decisive Treatise* by providing the answers to the central questions debated with differing outcomes by the various schools of Islamic theology (*kalām*), such as the manner of proving God's existence, and God's attributes and actions. He concludes this work by providing a method of scriptural interpretation, more specifically the articulation between the apparent and the real meaning of the Qur'an.

Before going on to discuss the rules of interpretation laid out by Averroes, it is important to highlight his description of three different classes of people when assenting to religious principles. As he had stressed in the *Decisive Treatise*, there are three fundamental religious principles that a believer cannot dispute: (1) God's existence, (2) the prophetic missions together with the sacred books revealed to them, and (3) happiness or misery in the Hereafter.²¹ His proposed distinction may seem elitist in the sense that not every individual is deemed fit for a philosophical understanding of these truths. In the Andalusian philosopher's estimation, the more intellectual and immaterial a conception of God and his creation one is able to attain, the closer one is to the philosophical, scientifically adequate understanding of God which is the one proposed by the philosophers. People are divided into three classes according to the respective type of assent to religious truth. 'Assent' consists in an inner conviction and affirmation or denial of a given principle or proposition.²² Assent is also defined by Averroes as the knowledge that something exists or does not exist, whereas concept (or conception) implies knowledge of

²¹ Ibid., p. 18.

²² 'Assent is the firm assertion or denial of something, and it comes about in two ways: (a) either absolutely, like our saying "does vacuum exist?" or (b) with qualification, like our saying "is the world created?" Now this sort of seeking is always asked about by the particle "does" [or "is" (hal)], in Averroës' *Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's 'Topics', 'Rhetoric', and 'Poetics'*, ed. and trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 103, n. 1.

the meaning of a given term.²³ In addition to the philosophers – who conceive of God in purely abstract, spiritual terms – and the people – who do not have such capacity and therefore picture God and the Hereafter with their imagination or representation – there is a middle class, which Averroes identifies with the theologians, whose arguments are not as stringent and compelling as those of the philosophers, but who do not rely as heavily on imagination in order to grasp religious truths, and thus they rise slightly above the general public.

Before delving into the details of the relation between the various classes, we may note that Averroes proposes, at the end of the *Decisive Treatise*, to substitute Islamic theology (*kalām*) with philosophy, as the yardstick by which the religious books are to be interpreted, setting up the philosophers as the new guardians of true belief and orthodoxy.²⁴ For the theologians had not been able to form a consensus regarding scriptural exegesis, and their interpretations could not rise to the level of philosophy; therefore they did not represent significant progress in relation to the more anthropomorphic representations that were used by Muslims at large. When expounding his rules for interpretation in the *Uncovering the Methods*, Averroes mentions the philosophers, who understand the metaphorical reading of religious literature, which is the real meaning behind the figurative meaning, and the majority of people, who only in certain cases are allowed access to the real meaning behind the literal meaning. Philosophers should decide what most people can and cannot access by way of metaphorical interpretation, and the manner in which these texts should be presented, based on the assumption that not every person has the same intellectual abilities and training. This position had already been advocated in the *Decisive Treatise*, which established the philosophers as the interpreters of religious texts. Averroes' intended aim in setting up the philosophers of the Greek tradition as guardians of orthodoxy is not to hide the philosophical meaning of the Qur'an from the majority of Muslims, but to protect their faith, since without a visual and more material understanding the majority of believers cannot grasp God, given that their intellects are not so powerful that they can relinquish the use of imagination in their beliefs about the divine.

In the *Decisive Treatise*, a text that predates *Uncovering the Methods*, Averroes makes a threefold distinction of religious verses, which is loosely parallel to the distinction between the first, apparent type, and the remaining types of religious texts that admit of interpretation. Dividing interpretable verses into two categories, he argues that some verses do not admit of interpretation by anyone, including

²³ Charles E. Butterworth, 'À propos du traité "al-Ḍarūrī fī l-manṭiq" d'Averroès et les termes "taṣdīq" et "taṣawwur" qui y sont développés', in *Averroes and the Aristotelian Tradition: Sources, Constitution and Reception of the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd (1126–1198): Proceedings of the Fourth Symposium Averroicum, Cologne, 1996*, ed. Gerhard Endress and Jan A. Aertsen, with the assistance of Klaus Braun (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 163–71, p. 167, n. 5. Moreover, assent is effected through syllogism, induction or example (ibid).

²⁴ See Idoia Maiza Ozcoidi, *La concepción de la filosofía en Averroes: Análisis crítico del Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (Madrid: Trotta, 2001), pp. 17, 27.

the philosophers. In that case, an interpretation would constitute innovation with regard to accepted doctrine, and the persons in question would be legitimately considered unbelievers, whether they are philosophers or not.

As for the remaining two types of verses, they admit of interpretation only by the philosophers, who make up the demonstrative class. Some of the verses that admit of interpretation are clear, and some are obscure, and a mistake in their interpretation is excusable for those (i.e., philosophers) who are experts in the matter. In addition to the apparent verses, those that should be interpreted include both clear and ambiguous verses. The metaphorical meanings of some verses may be accessible to all, or reserved for the philosophers. The latter may find the literature whose true meaning is only accessible to them clear or ambiguous.²⁵

The *Decisive Treatise* offers examples of legitimate interpretation of religious texts. Among the verses that are to be interpreted but not divulged is one describing God's movement in space, towards heaven (Q. 2:29). This is a clear example of a verse that must be interpreted by philosophers but not the majority of believers. The philosophical tradition was consistent in stating that only material substances can move, since movement implies traversing a distance and existing in space. Space and corporeality are interconnected. Equally, substances bearing these characteristics exist in time since movement presupposes time. Entities that exist in space and time are temporal and must eventually perish, given that any material being is subject to generation and corruption. Not having these material characteristics, God could not possibly move, in the literal sense of the term. Therefore, any movement that is predicated of God must be taken in a metaphorical light, as indicating God's power or ability to create. However, for people who cannot think of God except through images and in some material way, the interpretation of the verse in question is not permitted, nor is the fact that there is a hidden meaning. This prohibition is meant to protect their belief in God. In this sense, too, it is acceptable for most people to picture God in heaven, and this is metaphorically, but not literally, true.²⁶ However, not being a corporal or physical substance, God does not have a material abode or a place.

Philosophers cannot accept the concept that God is in heaven or has a place. This expression must be seen to indicate his majesty. The same verses are understood differently by philosophers and other Muslims, with the same outcome of reasserting faith in God.

It has become clear why philosophers need to interpret metaphorically verses of the Qur'an which present God in an anthropomorphic way or ascribe to him bodily or material attributes. Material beings are necessarily finite and perishable. Why is it not possible to reveal the metaphorical interpretations of religious texts to the majority of believers?

²⁵ Hourani notes that according to Averroes any metaphorical meaning must be confirmed by another passage of the Qur'an, as explicitly stated therein; *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, Introduction, p. 25.

²⁶ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 20.

Averroes states in the *Decisive Treatise* that interpretation involves two steps. The first one is to remove the allegorical meaning, or the image in question; for instance, God's material place, such as heaven. The second step is to provide the true, inner meaning: God's majesty or omnipotence. Given that most people cannot grasp the spiritual meaning, once their representations of God are removed they would cease to accept God's existence. Equally, philosophers would find it hard to believe in a God with physical attributes. Hence the importance of having different registers of religious discourse.

Averroes illustrates this point eloquently with the example of the physician, who stands to the health of the body – in a literal, not metaphorical, way – as the philosopher stands to the health of the soul. The assumption is that not everyone can be a physician, and one must rely on the advice of the physician and his explanations and take the prescribed medicine in order to recover or stay healthy. If someone comes along arguing that those explanations provided by the doctor are not the true ones and sets about to explain the real reasons in a technical jargon understood only by physicians, the majority of people, not understanding the technical explanation, cease to follow the physician's advice. They will no longer believe in salvation and in the Hereafter, in other words, that 'there is a health that must be preserved or a sickness that must be removed'.²⁷ Averroes adds that the one inducing unbelief is himself an unbeliever, because he undermines the foundations of belief. He specifically faults the Ash'arites for playing just this role – forcing a certain interpretation of the Qur'an on people and charging with unbelief those who do not accept it. They are thus doubly misguided, because they induce unbelief and because their methods are not even up to the standard of philosophy. They spread false interpretations and oblige others to follow them.

In both works, the *Decisive Treatise* and the *Uncovering the Methods*, Averroes presents a distinction between the literal and the apparent senses of religious literature. The second work is an expansion on the first regarding this issue. The issue of Qur'anic interpretation had been pivotal since the beginning of Islamic theology. Theological positions were often defined by their approach to scripture. Averroes is certainly a champion of this tradition of metaphorical reading of scripture, favouring the Mu'tazilites for providing a more spiritual exegesis. The Ash'arite approach is, according to him, neither philosophical nor accessible to the vast majority of people.

Towards the end of the *Decisive Treatise* Averroes claims that the early followers of Islam did not have recourse to interpretation and had a humbler attitude towards the Qur'an. Averroes argues that this attitude was more legitimate. Does this mean that interpretation was then absent and should therefore be totally excluded? Obviously, Averroes does not go back on his defence of a metaphorical reading of the Qur'an, but he reminds the reader that, in early Islam, if someone conceived of an interpretation they would not divulge it: 'For those in the earliest days came to have perfect virtue and piety only by practicing these statements, without making

²⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

interpretations of them; and any one of them who grasped an interpretation did not think fit to declare it'.²⁸ The practice and spread of interpretations gave rise to the different factions in Islam, who were often at odds with each other. Averroes does not mean here to suppress metaphorical reading altogether, but he does consider it reserved for a minority of believers, the philosophers trained in the Aristotelian tradition. This leitmotiv is also present in *Uncovering the Methods*, although he there offers a more detailed exposition of interpretation.

In *Uncovering the Methods* we find five ways of approaching the scriptural text. First, the apparent meaning may coincide with the real meaning. In this case, the apparent text should not be metaphorically interpreted, but rather presented to everyone – both philosophers and the majority – as it is. The *Decisive Treatise* also states that some verses are self-evident and do not require interpretation, and they are to be read and understood by all, according to their apparent, literal sense.

The remaining four meanings imply some sort of interpretation, since the real meaning differs from the apparent meaning. In these cases, the production of a representation is called for, in the sense that a figurative expression stands for the literal meaning intended.

In the first metaphorical type the meaning of the representation is difficult to grasp and not widely known; therefore it should not be presented to untrained people – to non-philosophers. That it is indeed a representation and the reason it is, as well as the meaning of the representation, are difficult to establish; and this can be accomplished only through lengthy syllogisms, which should not be divulged to the general public.

In the second metaphorical type, both the real meaning and the fact of its interpretability are known, so all should have access to the real, metaphorical meaning. It is clear to all why and that the text in question is a representation.

The third metaphorical meaning implies a ready knowledge that the verse in question requires interpretation, but the interpretation itself is obscure and difficult. As an example, Averroes states:

This is similar to the saying of the [Prophet], peace be on him: 'The Black Stone is God's right hand on earth', to which may be added other similar sayings which are either self-evident or readily known to be representations, but the reasons why they are representations are known through an elaborate process. The obligation in this case is not to be interpreted except by the elect among the learned. Those who know that this is a representation, but do not belong to the men of learning, will be told why it is a representation; either because it is ambiguous ... or because the representation thereof is reduced to what is closer to their understandings. Perhaps this is the proper course in order to dispel the lingering ambiguity in their souls.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

²⁹ Averroes, *Faith and Reason in Islam*, p. 129 (slightly modified).

Since all are aware that a representation is involved, an interpretation ought in any case to be provided. Therefore, the interpretation should be geared to the specific audience in question. Interestingly, Averroes invokes here a distinction between existents employed by al-Ghazzali for such interpretations. The ‘proof of Islam’, as the theologian was dubbed, stipulates five modes of existence or meaning, ‘the essential, the sensible, the imaginary, the intelligible and the ambiguous’.³⁰ The essential conveys the real meaning, which is the apparent one. The remaining four types of existence are related to essential existence but imply a particular manner of apprehending, and should be made available to those who cannot take the essential existence as the real meaning. Clearly, the sensible and the intellectual existents are two different ways of approaching the same reality, akin to the use of sense perception or the mind to grasp something. The imaginary and the ambiguous are other ways of reading the religious text. Imagination is for the philosophers a certain faculty of the human mind, which must be used in certain contexts, and which involves a more material, sensible apprehension, rather than a purely intellectual understanding.

Averroes holds that the aforementioned senses of existence should be present in some approaches to the religious text, and that each type should be used according to its persuasive force, its ability to bring about assent to the main religious truths.

He finally presents the fourth metaphorical type, which concerns statements that are not readily known to be representational rather than literal, as it is not widely known that they require interpretation; however, the reason behind the representation, why they are metaphorical and what they mean, is easily known. In other words, it is easily known why they are representations but not that they are representations. Therefore they should not be interpreted, since it would open the way to various readings, which might stray too far from the literal meaning of the text; and in some cases it may lead to unbelief. Since at any rate the fact of their interpretability is not divulged, it should not be advertised. There is no reason to divulge their true meaning to any except those who are well grounded in knowledge. If these know that the verses are interpretable, then they also know why, but if they are not aware of their interpretability, they would not easily grasp why or how.

What is the rationale behind this classification of four kinds of interpretative approach to scripture? Averroes thinks of all possible combinations of whether the fact of the interpretation can be known, on the one hand, and why it can be known, on the other. Among the four types requiring interpretation, in the first case both the fact and the reason why are easily known, with the assumption that it may be divulged, because there is no difficulty involved. In the second case, both the fact and the reason why the verse is to be interpreted are difficult to understand. In the third case, the fact of the interpretation is known, but not the reason why. Therefore, the interpretation should be provided, as it is likely to be understood

³⁰ Averroes, *Faith and Reason in Islam*, p. 130. See also Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 19.

by the intended audience. In the last type, since the fact that the verse required interpretation is not known, and its meaning is difficult to grasp, care should be taken in its interpretation, which should not be divulged to the majority of people.

It emerges from the foregoing that, on the whole, some verses are to be read literally and some can be interpreted, especially in the case of physical references to God in the Qur'an or the traditions of Muhammad. We find a differentiation between those verses that admit of interpretation and those which do not.

Uncovering the Methods makes a distinction between two related aspects, the knowability of an interpretation and the reason for it, acknowledging that some verses are clearly to be interpreted in the eyes of all Muslims. So it would not make sense to hide the fact that an interpretation is required if most or all Muslims acknowledge it. On the other hand, difficult interpretations should be kept from the public, especially in the case of obscure verses.

Averroes' approach does not involve a radical rationalism, for he does not believe that the Qur'an can be interpreted in only one way, or that a verse can be successfully and clearly deciphered by the philosophers, or that a unanimous reading of all verses could be agreed upon. There can be disagreements as to the reading of certain verses or texts, and even philosophers may never be able to understand the ultimate meaning of a given passage, especially if it is ambiguous. Here Averroes' rationalism, with its trust in the ability of reason to understand the ultimate realities, shows its limits, in the sense that not everything in religious texts is clear, not everything pertaining to God can be fathomed by our minds.

In other ways, however, Averroes' theory of exegesis emphasises the preponderance and hegemony of philosophy in social and political terms; for in Averroes' vision it is up to the philosophers to determine how religious texts should be read and presented – this task is taken away from religious authorities.

Both the *Decisive Treatise* and the *Uncovering the Methods* entrust the philosophers with the task of interpreting the Qur'an correctly, for only they possess the demonstrative, in other words, 'scientific' knowledge that is absent from the other classes. The implications of substituting the religious with the philosophical class are considered later in this study, when the different types of assent are discussed.

In addition to interpretation, it is the task of philosophers to present religious texts to all Muslims, in their role as preservers of the faith. Averroes here deems the efforts of the theologians to have failed in their attempt to present a credible and profitable reading of the Qur'an, hence the need for the intervention of the philosophers.

Averroes' general criterion for interpretation, as seen in these works, is to bring people to accept certain basic religious principles, which are to be believed for the sake of the individual's salvation and political stability. It is for the philosophers to make the final decision on the meaning of religious texts and the way they should be presented to the Muslim community at large. Of the texts that admit of interpretation, some can be shared with the public, while others should be read literally by the public, but not by the philosophers. The public may in some cases access the same interpretation as the philosophers, or the philosophers may

prepare a special interpretation for them, according to their abilities and the four non-literal types of existence listed by al-Ghazzali.

Uncovering the Methods was written after the *Decisive Treatise*, and it allows more specifically for some interpretations to be publicly divulged. The core of beliefs that is binding on all Muslims is also extended, in the former work, to include: (1) the existence of God, (2) God's unity, (3) God's attributes of perfection, (4) God's freedom from imperfection, (5) the creation of the world, (6) the validity of prophecy, (7) God's justice and (8) the resurrection – although the exact manner of belief in these items is not detailed by Averroes.³¹

It is now important to study the different types of assent with their corresponding classes. Three classes are listed according to the type of assent, but they could also be considered political classes, since religion inevitably plays an essential role in Averroes' society. The distinction between different philosophical and literary methods had been made by Aristotle, but Averroes turns these into different types of assent, furthermore assigning them to three different classes.

An examination of this issue as it is presented in the *Decisive Treatise* is called for before proceeding to the more detailed treatment in the commentary literature.

The Different Types of Assent and Different Classes of People

We have seen that according to Averroes there is no significant difference between the purpose of human existence in the Qur'an and in Aristotle. The former enjoins us to know God and act in a manner that reflects knowledge of God and the purpose of his creation. Aristotle, too, understood the human being as a rational animal who can contemplate the divine and thus share in divine bliss (though not necessarily in a Hereafter). Both the religious and the philosophical tradition encourage a study of the divine. The goals of philosophy and religion coincide and encourage the knowledge of the truth and the practice of virtue in order to obtain the ultimate reward.

However, not every human being is equally intellectually gifted, and aptitudes vary from individual to individual. Correspondingly, there are different types of assent to religious or philosophical truth. Assent means the belief in and acceptance of certain religious tenets. According to Averroes this intellectual attitude of acceptance is closely bound up with conviction, for it is not possible to assent to something in which one does not firmly believe. This belief is not merely external assent, but true inner persuasion.³² There is an inner faith that must be fostered in all people, which will ensure happiness in the Hereafter.

Averroes states that there are different approaches to the truth: one which is more specifically philosophical, closely associated with the philosophers by virtue of the method used, and others that lead to the same truth but by different means.

³¹ Fakhry, 'Philosophy and Scripture in the Theology of Averroes', pp. 85–7.

³² Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 17.

The first method, which Averroes states is reserved for a minority of people, is the demonstrative method. Those who aspire to this method must meet two conditions: innate intelligence and religious virtue and justice. The implication, moreover, is that philosophers must be trained in the ancient disciplines and know logic, which is the art of sound reasoning, as well as the theories of the Ancients, Aristotle in particular.

There are two other types of assent, each with its corresponding group or class. The second, ranking just below the philosophical or demonstrative method, is the dialectical method. In the *Decisive Treatise*, Averroes identifies it with *kalām*, represented by such schools as the Muʿtazilites and the Ashʿarites.

In what is the method of the theologians different from that of the philosophers? The interpretations of the theologians are not consistent either in using syllogistic logic or in providing a spiritual, rather than material, reading of scripture. Therefore, both the method they use and the content they discern in scripture are flawed. Their method, dialectical, is only tentative, and does not take full account of the ancient sciences, which cannot be overlooked in reading religious texts. However, given their rational attempt to understand scripture and provide a metaphorical interpretation, this class is situated between the higher, demonstrative class, and the lower, rhetorical class. The latter accepts the likenesses and literal meaning of the religious text rather than employing any kind of reasoning. Their assent, as we have seen, involves a more material or physical perception of the religious reality.

Averroes sets the demonstrative class apart from the other two:

Concerning the things that are known only by demonstration due to their being hidden, God has been gracious to His servants for whom there is no path by means of demonstration – either due to their innate dispositions, their habits, or their lack of facilities for education – by coining for them likenesses and similarities of these [hidden things] and calling them to assent by means of those likenesses, since it is possible for assent to those likenesses to come about by means of the indications shared by all – I mean, the dialectical and the rhetorical. This is the reason for the Law being divided into an apparent sense and an inner sense. For the apparent sense is those likenesses coined for those meanings, and the inner sense is those meanings that reveal themselves only to those adept in demonstration.³³

Averroes draws a link between interpretation and the different classes. The right interpretation is reserved to the philosophers, because it involves training in the ancient sciences, which is lacking in the remaining two classes. For these classes, here lumped together, the likeness or simile represents the true meaning of a verse in a figurative way.

In each of the three classes, the final goal is to produce assent to religious tenets, and the means should vary according to that intended end.

³³ Ibid., p. 19.

In order to believe, the philosopher needs interpretation as much as the common Muslim needs generally to follow the literal meaning, or an interpretation especially crafted for him or her. Since the latter is more likely use to imagination in understanding religious matters, the approach to the religious text must be adjusted accordingly. The philosopher, who has a more spiritual understanding of divine nature, might fall into unbelief if no such interpretation is provided, for he or she cannot assent to material or anthropomorphic representations of God and divine realities. Therefore, not to allow a philosophical reading of scripture would leave out an important segment, albeit a minority, of the Muslim community. In unravelling these interpretations, philosophers will also bring them in line with Greek philosophy and science.

The establishment of three classes and modes of assent based on the formation of concepts is made clear by Averroes. Religion teaches true science and true practice in helping believers to form a concept and give assent. There are three methods of inducing assent – demonstrative, dialectical and rhetorical – through the thing itself or its likeness. In view of the fact that not everyone understands demonstrations or any kind of lengthy arguments, religion should comprise all these three kinds of assent.³⁴

As Averroes explains, each class has a specific form of assent, which is either more material or more spiritual. Before assent occurs, it is necessary to form a concept, which is presented in the guise of a proposition or affirmation. In religious matters, this will refer to the ultimate reality, God, or a related issue such as his attributes, his prophets and the Hereafter. Since one cannot understand or truly assent to something one does not understand, the realities of religion must be presented in a way such as to be accepted by all, in different ways to different classes. If the meaning of the texts is plain for everyone, no interpretation is required. Otherwise, an interpretation has to be produced; but it is usually the philosophers who require such a metaphorical reading. The philosophers know both the ultimate meaning and how to present it to the other classes, inducing assent by members of the other classes. The Qur'an presents images of God, referring to his hand and his sitting on a throne, which must be taken at face value by the rhetorical class. The true meaning of these similes – that they indicate God's power and majesty – should not be openly revealed. In the case of ambiguous verses, the philosophers should state the fact of their ambiguity, and not reveal their true meaning if they think it jeopardises anyone's faith. Averroes stresses that the Qur'an is such a

³⁴ Ibid., p. 24. Marc Geoffroy places the three kinds of discourse in Averroes within twelfth-century Almohad society. Thus the rhetorical class has a traditional, literalist, religious discourse, represented for instance by the Hanbalite school. Dialectical discourse employs common opinions and is defended by theologians such as the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites. Finally, demonstrative discourse is practised by philosophers, who use physics and metaphysics in their arguments; see Marc Geoffroy, 'L'almoahadisme théologique d'Averroès (Ibn Rušd)', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 66 (1999): pp. 9–47, p. 19.

rich text as to suit all manners of assent, from the philosophical to the rhetorical. While one can claim that Averroes is measuring religious truth by a philosophical standard, in this sense subordinating religion to philosophy, this is only partly true. In reality he considers the Qur'an to be much richer than any philosophical text, which would produce only one mode of assent, the philosophers being only one of the three classes to which the Qur'an addresses itself. Philosophy is but one of three valid ways in which to speak of God, although Averroes implies that philosophy is a fundamental key for the understanding of the Qur'an and religious texts. Philosophy may be pivotal for the interpretation of religious texts, but can in no way claim to be richer than the Qur'an.

While dialectical and rhetorical assent is studied and systematised by philosophers, such as Aristotle, the proper method used by philosophers is the demonstrative method. Averroes goes on to state that religion aims at taking care of the majority of people, who belong to the dialectical and the rhetorical classes, the latter being more numerous than the former, without losing sight of the minority constituted by the philosophers.

Averroes believes that the use of formal logic is not limited to the demonstrative class, although the premisses that compose the demonstrative syllogism differ from the ones making up the dialectical and the rhetorical syllogism, as we shall see. A syllogism, as expounded by Aristotle in the *Prior Analytics*, consists of two premisses, and a conclusion, which necessarily follows from the premisses. If a valid inference is produced, by following valid rules for the deduction of a conclusion from its premisses, and if these premisses are true, then the conclusion is necessarily true. Any type of valid reasoning implies use of a syllogism, even if one of the premisses is implicit. Alongside demonstrative syllogisms, there are also rhetorical and dialectical syllogisms.

Regarding the rules of interpretation, Averroes expounds in the *Decisive Treatise* the four types of methods or syllogisms in religion, that include all possible combinations of premisses and conclusions. He shows which can be common, certain or uncertain, and commonly accepted, and where interpretation may or may not be allowed. In the first instance, where no interpretation is licit, the premisses are certain, and generally accepted – though resulting from demonstration – and the conclusion is the thing itself, not a likeness. This method or type of syllogism is particular, not demonstrative – which deals primarily with universals – and the method is rhetorical or dialectical.

In the second type, the premisses are certain (as in the demonstrative method) as well as generally accepted, and the conclusion is not the matter in itself but its likeness. Since the premisses are both certain and commonly accepted, that is to say, satisfying both the demonstrative as well as the dialectical and the rhetorical classes, they do not admit of interpretation; but the conclusion, which consists in a likeness, not the thing in itself, does admit of interpretation.

The third type is the opposite of the second, since the conclusions are the things in themselves, while the premisses are their likenesses, and are suppositional and

generally accepted, not certain. They therefore require interpretation on the part of the philosophers. The conclusions, however, do not admit of interpretation.

In the fourth kind of interpretative syllogism the premisses are not certain but are generally accepted and suppositional, that is, satisfying the dialectical and rhetorical classes, but not the demonstrative class, and the conclusions are not the things in themselves but likenesses of them. Therefore both premisses and conclusion should be interpreted, but no part of the true meaning of premisses and conclusion must be divulged by the philosophers.³⁵

In these four types of interpretative syllogism we find premisses that may be at once certain and commonly accepted, or premisses that are commonly accepted but not certain. This means that all premisses must be accepted as they are by the dialectical and the rhetorical classes. If they happen to be also certain, that is, demonstratively certain, then they should be accepted as such by the philosophers. If on the other hand the premisses are commonly accepted but not certain, the real or hidden meaning must be sought by the philosophers. As for the conclusions resulting from such premisses, they are either the thing in itself or a likeness – in other words, a representation of the thing itself. If the former, they must be taken as they are by all classes; if the latter, then their hidden, certain meaning must be unveiled by the philosophers. We know from Aristotle's logical writings – such as the *Prior Analytics*, which treats the various types of syllogism – and Averroes' commentaries on them, that in a valid syllogism the premisses are always better known than the conclusion. In the same way, the conclusion of a legal analogy also seeks to throw light on a matter previously unknown. The premisses are always commonly accepted, but may not be certain, that is, demonstrative. The conclusions are the intended outcome itself or a representation thereof. In both premisses and conclusions there may be an interpretation required, but only for the philosophers. It is in *Uncovering the Methods* that certain interpretations can be provided for the general public, a view that may seem a new development in Averroes' conceptualisation of this issue. Unfortunately, Averroes does not provide illustrations of these syllogisms.

Averroes upholds that the dialectical and the rhetorical should follow the apparent sense of text, whereas later in *Uncovering the Methods* he states that some interpretations are acceptable for non-philosophers. However, he does anticipate that if the interpretation is more convincing than the apparent meaning, it should be used, especially by someone who attains the level of the dialectical class.³⁶ He envisages interpretations for the dialectical class, like some interpretations of the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites.

How does Averroes define these three classes, a pivotal theme in the *Decisive Treatise*? The rhetorical class is composed of people who are not at all versed in interpretation, and they are the overwhelming majority. Others are versed in dialectical interpretation, either by nature or by custom. Finally, there are those who are versed

³⁵ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 24.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 25–6.

in demonstrative interpretation by nature and art, in other words, philosophy, and their interpretations should not be shared with the other two classes.³⁷

Membership in the dialectical class is determined by nature or custom, that is, by having the right disposition, a higher than average intellectual ability and training in the Islamic sciences. As for the philosophers, they stand apart through their superior intellectual ability and their training in ancient sciences and philosophy. 'Wisdom' is used in this work of Averroes to signify philosophy (*falsafa*). Each of these classes understands scripture in its own proper way.

The reason the interpretations of the philosophers should not be shared even with the dialectical class is that, owing to their lack of training in philosophy, they would misunderstand them; moreover, they would transmit them in a distorted fashion to the rhetorical class, thus spreading unbelief. Averroes stresses that one who spreads unbelief is himself an unbeliever. He mentions al-Ghazzali as a glaring example of such a problem, charging him with having spread a distorted version of the philosophers' theories, in addition to inaccurate interpretations of the religious texts.

What inspired Averroes to formulate his theory of three classes and three types of assent? The concepts of demonstration, dialectic and rhetoric are to be found in the writings of Aristotle, who devoted specific works to these subjects. In the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Prior Analytics* (the latter laying the foundations of syllogistic logic) he establishes the conditions for demonstration, which yields certain knowledge, while his considerations on dialectic are to be found in his *Topics*, which deals with the methodology and themes to be used in more informal kinds of inference and questions that are not strictly demonstrative. His *Rhetoric* deals with the art of public speaking and persuasion. Does Aristotle separate these three methods into three classes as does Averroes? While the Stagirite admits that a higher level of knowledge is obtained from demonstration, he links the three arts more strongly than does Averroes. For Aristotle, they serve different purposes, and can be complementary. Rhetoric has an obvious use in politics and dialectic can be another way of pursuing philosophy, as is patent in Plato's dialogues. The same themes are often found in Aristotle's logical works. His *Topics* complements in many ways the introductory works on logic, such as *On Interpretation* and the *Categories*, expanding on issues like definition, genus and species, differentia, and their use in dialectical discourse. While Averroes generally follows the main goals of Aristotle's logical books, he uses them in a particular way, by contextualising the themes for a Muslim audience. His stress on the need to keep the philosophical interpretations hidden from the other classes is a case in point. Whereas philosophers like Socrates and even Aristotle faced serious difficulties with the political authorities of the day, the role of philosophy in medieval al-Andalus was possibly even more fragile than it was in ancient Greece. The three types of assent are rigidly associated with three classes of people by Averroes to

³⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

shield philosophy from the accusation of impiety and to set the philosophical class as a religious and consequently also as a political authority.

The division between the three classes, based on Aristotle's distinction between the three arts, finds confirmation, according to Averroes, in the Qur'an. He cleverly draws on the similarity between Aristotelian terminology, as it had been translated into Arabic, and scriptural terminology. As it is stated in a well-known Qur'anic verse, which refers to the dialogue between Muhammad and the Jews: 'Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious' (Q. 16:125).³⁸

The terms referred to in this verse for addressing a specific audience are wisdom, good admonition or preaching, and dispute. The first term in Arabic, *ḥikma*, stands for philosophy. In fact, Averroes uses *ḥikma* instead of the Greek *falsafa* to refer to philosophy throughout the *Decisive Treatise*, as a more Islamic term. The third term in the verse comes from the root j-d-l, from which *jadal*, 'dialectic', derives. The middle term, *maw'iza*, which is also translated as '(religious) exhortation', can be identified with rhetoric.³⁹ Averroes sees the distinction between the three classes in the Qur'an, for, as he explains, scripture addresses all kinds of people, the majority as well as the philosophers, together with those who attempt to provide some interpretation of religious texts, namely the theologians. He thus imports Aristotle's various methods of inference and of addressing an interlocutor into religious discussions. In the context of the *Decisive Treatise* these three methods refer specifically to assent to religious truths, in a move that Islamises Aristotle's theory about different forms of speech and knowledge.

The philosophers are easily distinguishable from the multitude in any context. The dialecticians, as we have seen, Averroes identifies with the theologians, a class that was specifically Islamic and did not exist in Aristotle's time. The method of dialogue and debate, however, which for Aristotle could be a stepping-stone to the study of philosophy, seems a fitting description of the theologians, in Averroes' estimation. He accuses them of creating factions with their inaccurate interpretations, by divulging these to the general public, who do not understand them and are thus led to unbelief. Other problems with these theological interpretations fundamentally consist in the fact that they do not serve either the philosophers or the multitude. They are too obscure for the multitude, but are not truly demonstrative; indeed, some of their methods, such as those of the Ash'arites, are sophistical, because they do not accept necessary inference and causality, but

³⁸ *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān*, New Edition with Qur'anic Text (Arabic), Revised Translation, Commentary and Newly Compiled Comprehensive Index by Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1997), p. 669.

³⁹ For a detailed discussion of this theme, see Averroës (Ibn Rušd), *Commentaire moyen à la Rhétorique d'Aristote*, introduction générale, édition critique du texte arabe, traduction française, commentaire et tables par Maroun Aouad, vol. I, Introduction générale et tables; vol. II, Édition et traduction; vol. III, *Commentaire du Commentaire* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), vol. III, pp. 115–18.

rather accept God as the only and immediate cause of all that is. They thus deny the necessary relation between cause and effect, such as, for instance, fire and burning.

Given that the methods and interpretations of the theologians are not clear and scientific like those of the philosophers, nor apparent to the general public regarding religious matters, they do not share in the qualities of the other two classes. The Ash'arites do not accept secondary causality. Averroes, like most philosophers, defends the idea that God delegates power not only to humans but to all sorts of living things, and establishes this as a condition of demonstrative thinking. Secondary causality, according to him, in no way compromises God's omnipotence and indeed shows his wisdom. Averroes considers the denial of secondary causality as unscientific and as disqualifying the Ash'arites from demonstration, as well as flying in the face of common sense.

Instead of following the theological schools, one should simply adhere to the Qur'an, which contains all possible methods of alerting any individual to the truth, and all methods of persuasion, namely the demonstrative and the rhetorical methods.⁴⁰ Averroes considers the text of the Qur'an to contain the best way of teaching the multitude, as well as the ultimate message for the philosophers. The Qur'an is a book that is addressed to all human beings, and suits any type of assent.

Due to the perfection of the Qur'an – and here Averroes' allusion to the uniqueness or the inimitability (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'an is noteworthy – it is not possible for any other type of text to come near its perfection.⁴¹ The Qur'an must accordingly be treated with the greatest respect, for its interpretation must be produced only when necessary. To undo the harm caused by the Ash'arites, in particular, one should read scripture in search of the things one ought to believe, accept the literal meaning as much as possible, and go beyond it only if the interpretation is apparent. The inimitability of the Qur'an consists precisely in this, its being most perfectly persuasive and clear while alerting those adept in interpretation to the hidden meanings, which can be demonstratively defended but are not apparent to the multitude.

The Qur'an is inimitable in drawing assent from everyone, and vastly superior to any other type of text. In addition, Averroes points to two additional virtues of the Qur'an, the second being that its meanings can be defended – rationally – up to a point, after which, if an interpretation is required, only the philosophers understand it. In addition, and as the third strength, Averroes mentions the fact that the Qur'an satisfies all the needs of the philosophers looking for a more immaterial understanding of the religious truths. The signs indicating the fundamental aspects of religious truths are all to be found in the Qur'an.

This is a text which does not make its hidden meanings apparent to anyone except the philosophers, and that presents itself to each person according to his or her intellectual capacities. In this sense, it obviously has a much wider audience than Aristotle's works.

⁴⁰ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 31.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

As far as content is concerned, it is not the case that philosophers must believe in something different from the general public or deny any of the fundamental religious truths. The mode of belief is different, though. The demonstrative approach, implicitly contained in the Qur'an, is only one of various ways leading to belief, even if it is the most scientific and most spiritual one.

Averroes states in no uncertain terms that there is only one truth, and hence there is no religious truth different from philosophical truth. The goals of philosophy and religion coincide, however differently expressed. True philosophy does not deny God's existence, and neither does it deny the Hereafter, or the missions of the prophets. As regards this third point, a fitting identification of the leader of the Islamic community with Plato's philosopher-king already had a precedent in Alfarabi's *Principles of the Views of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City*.⁴² On this interpretation, the prophets would also have been philosophers.

Therefore, Averroes believes that the philosophers should be the masters of religious interpretation and its transmission to the multitude. He also proposes to substitute the misleading interpretations of the theologians with a different type of interpretation, which rises above a purely literal and traditionalist reading of the sacred text, while steering clear of the confusing disputations of the dialecticians, and keeping in mind the needs of the philosophers.⁴³

The Andalusian philosopher does not provide an example of that middle way for the multitude which would raise them somewhat above the rhetorical level and would warrant the abolishing of traditional Islamic theology, maintaining only two classes. It can be argued that the *Decisive Treatise* is a programmatic work, a manifesto that does not flesh out all the issues debated by its author. A deeper understanding of the distinction between demonstrative, dialectical and rhetorical classes and modes of assent is thus to be sought in his other works. The *Decisive Treatise* is, by virtue of the terminology used, a work accessible to all educated classes, instead of only the philosophers. This work purports to address a vast audience of anyone interested in religious matters and the interpretation of the Qur'an – in other words, anyone with an interest in theology and the Islamic creed, and in the question of the study and practice of philosophy in this context. Instead of employing technical philosophical terms that one would find in philosophical texts, Averroes uses Qur'anic terms to denote philosophical realities. Strictly philosophical issues, he argues, should only be discussed in technical, demonstrative books. And this can only be a reference to Aristotle's works or Averroes' commentaries on them. Averroes states that he only allowed himself to address these issues openly because al-Ghazzali had already divulged his views on those issues for everyone to read in his works.

⁴² Alfarabi, *Al-Fārābī on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādī' Arā' Ahl al-Madīnah al-Faḍīlah*, ed. and trans. Richard Walzer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), in particular Chapter 15, pp. 228–58.

⁴³ Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, p. 33.

The *Decisive Treatise* is completed and complemented in many ways by later works such as *Uncovering the Methods* and the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, as well as by the later commentaries. Two main issues contribute fundamentally to the harmonisation between religion and philosophy: the interpretation of scripture and the Islamic tradition, and the issue of the threefold form of assent with its three corresponding classes. Correct interpretation is further expounded in *Uncovering the Methods*, as we have seen, although unfortunately Averroes does not seem to have applied his interpretative principles by composing a detailed commentary on the Qur'an. Instead, he produced long, detailed commentaries on Aristotle's works. The tradition of commentaries on Aristotle goes back to the Hellenistic period, but the long commentaries are a development introduced by Averroes.

As for the three forms of assent and respective classes, the debate is not expanded upon in the *Decisive Treatise*. We must therefore study the commentaries for further insight into what, exactly, Averroes means by the three forms of assent, their nature and methods. This will take us to his commentaries on *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics* and *Rhetoric*, which lay out respectively the rules for demonstrative, dialectical and rhetorical discourse. We have seen how Averroes points to the harmony between philosophy and religion through the use of Arabic terminology that has at once religious and philosophical connotations, observable in terms such as analogy/syllogism (*qiyās*) and religious or philosophical debate or dispute (*jadāl*). It can be argued that the articulation between philosophical and religious discourse lies precisely on the relation between the different forms of assent.

We will now study Averroes' commentaries on *Posterior Analytics*, where the demonstrative method is laid out, before proceeding to the commentaries on *Topics* and *Rhetoric*, with the underlying assumption that Averroes understands the three disciplines in much the same way in his various works, although they serve different purposes and are addressed to different audiences. The commentaries do not lose sight of contemporary twelfth-century theological and political debates, and although the long commentaries were written after the *Decisive Treatise*, Averroes had already studied and written on Aristotle's works on demonstration, dialectic and rhetoric when he composed it.

The *Posterior Analytics* was known in Arabic as *Kitāb al-burhān* (the book of demonstration or proof), and *Topics* as *Kitāb al-jadal* (the book of disputation). Finally, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was known as *Kitāb al-khaṭāba* (the book of rhetoric or oratory). The next chapter analyses Averroes' commentaries on *Posterior Analytics* in order better to understand his conception of demonstrative, and thus philosophical, discourse.

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Chapter 2

Demonstrative Discourse in Averroes' Commentaries on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*

In the *Decisive Treatise*, Averroes distinguishes three kinds of classes of people, and three methods of assenting to religious truth. One of these is the demonstrative method, which is practised by the philosophical class. It is intellectually the most demanding and rigorous, and it requires both an innate ability and training in philosophy, in addition to upright morals, on the part of those aspiring to belong to this class. In speaking of demonstration, Averroes seeks to adapt an Aristotelian concept to an Islamic context. His understanding of demonstration is pivotal for the articulation of philosophy and religion, from both a theoretical and political point of view. In order to grasp more fully the several connotations of demonstration, we must turn to Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* (also translated as *Second Analytics*, since it follows the *Prior* or *First Analytics*, a work that lays down Aristotle's rules of formal syllogistic logic), which purports to describe the concept and valid use of demonstration and demonstrative arguments.

The *Posterior Analytics* overlaps in content with other works of the *Organon* (the collection of Aristotle's logical writings), owing to its emphasis on the process of producing accurate definitions and because it pursues the study of such concepts as genus and species, which underpins much of Aristotelian science. The works constituting the *Organon* were the *Categories*, *De interpretatione* (*On Interpretation*), *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics* (treating dialectic) and *On Sophistical Refutations*, to which the Alexandrian commentators added *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*.¹

This chapter will look in broad strokes at Aristotle's understanding of demonstration in the *Posterior Analytics*, before turning to Averroes' interpretation of demonstration in his commentaries on this Aristotelian work, particularly the middle and long commentaries. Finally, it will examine how Averroes' idea of demonstration informs his theory about the three forms of assent and in particular the demonstrative, philosophical, form of assent and the class of its practitioners.

We have long commentaries written by Averroes on five of Aristotle's works: *De anima*, *Metaphysics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Physics* and *De caelo*. These long commentaries have been dated to the later part of his life and career, starting from

¹ See Averroès, *Commentaire moyen à la Rhétorique d'Aristote*, trans. Maroun Aouad, vol. I, *Introduction générale et tables* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), p. 4, following Deborah Black.

around 1180. The *Decisive Treatise*, written roughly between 1165 and 1170, and counted among the works of the middle period of Averroes' career, is considered to predate the *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*. However, in composing the *Decisive Treatise* he would have known Aristotle's work, given that he had by then composed his short commentaries – including that on *Posterior Analytics* – which are considered to be early works. It is therefore not unwarranted to use the *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics* in order retrospectively to throw light on the concept of demonstration in the *Decisive Treatise*. For the first book of the *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics* I will refer to Badawi's edition of the Arabic text; given that the original Arabic version of the second book is not extant, for that book I will refer to the 1562 Venice edition with its Latin translations by Abram and Burana.

The *Posterior Analytics* is a work by Aristotle meant to complement the *Prior Analytics*. Both form part of the *Organon*, meaning a tool or instrument, and cover all fundamental aspects of logic and scientific reasoning. 'Scientific' here signifies pertaining or leading to knowledge. In the *Posterior Analytics* demonstration stands for scientific deduction, a process of obtaining new knowledge through the linkage of universal notions.² The valid forms of syllogism are detailed in the *Prior Analytics*, whose conclusions are presupposed by the *Posterior Analytics*. Thus syllogism, and generally speaking formal logic, is a fundamental part of philosophy and defines demonstrative discourse for Averroes. The use of formal logic is indispensable for philosophers practising their art.

With regard to the role of syllogism, Averroes states that demonstration consists in a syllogism composed of proper premisses; therefore, one should study syllogism as part of studying demonstration, which is why the *Posterior* (or *Second*) *Analytics* builds upon the *Prior* (or *First*) *Analytics* and they share a common name (*Analytics*). More specifically, to study demonstrations is to study the matter of the demonstrative syllogism.³ Moreover, there is no science prior to demonstration, in the sense that we do not know demonstration on the basis of another science.⁴

Some theologians, such as al-Ghazzali, admit the legitimacy of using Aristotelian logic, given that logic had a purely formal aspect and did not bind its practitioner to any particular positions on the nature of God, the status of creation, or the interpretation of the Qur'an. Therefore logic, and other disciplines developed by the Ancients such as mathematics, could be used without detriment to Sunni

² Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 71a, p. 114.

³ Averroes, *Posteriorum Resolutoriorum Libro Duo. Expositio Magna, sive magna commentaria, Averrois in eosdem libros*, in *Aristotelis Opera quae extant omnia*, vol. 1, part 2 (Venice: Giunta, 1562), 557C, Abram, henceforth *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Book II.

⁴ Averroes, *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Book II, 561A, Abram.

doctrine. However, there were other aspects of the demonstrative discourse, as we shall see, which were not purely formal, and that implied the acceptance of certain basic principles of Aristotelian philosophy which al-Ghazzali considered incompatible with religion.

Another important aspect involving demonstration and scientific deduction as understood by Aristotle and Averroes was the notion of explanation, which in turn was closely related to that of cause. In the syllogism, a process occurs whereby the conclusion follows from the premisses in the same way that the effect proceeds from its cause or causes. Al-Ghazzali famously attacked the theory of causality in some of his most famous works, such as the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* – concerned that a theory of natural causality detracted from God's omnipotence in the way it ascribed powers to human beings or natural substances, and precluded the possibility of miracles.

The reason that the notions of causality and explanation are closely interwoven (in Greek, the single term 'aitia' denotes both cause and explanation) is not far to seek, for just as an effect issues from its own cause, the cause explains its effect – and in logical or epistemological terms, understanding is produced in the intellect by the explanation of a concept or argument. Averroes and previous Muslim philosophers did not question natural causality – for instance, the power of fire to burn certain substances – because they believed that God had created the universe according to an intelligible plan, which humans beings could uncover, even if they could not understand God's essence and nature or attain to his understanding of himself and Creation. They accepted the existence of an intrinsically rational universe and our ability to decipher its mysteries by applying our reason to the study of nature and the celestial world. Al-Ghazzali, however, was less confident in the abilities of the human intellect to understand God's design underlying events in the world.

For Aristotle, there is a parallelism between causality in the natural world and the way knowledge is produced in our minds. The natural and epistemological dimensions of causation are grounded in the general metaphysical principle of causality. Therefore, this principle is upheld by Averroes and his predecessors at all levels and not just in logic.

In addition to logic, the *Posterior Analytics* also treats questions concerning the possibility of human knowledge and the processes involved in this endeavour; as we have seen, the logical and the epistemological are here intertwined. Aristotle argues that the way things are first known to us, through sense experience, differs from their intrinsic knowability – for universals in themselves are more readily understood by the intellect than particulars. It is his work titled *On the Soul* (*De anima*) that details the process of acquiring knowledge and the different faculties of the soul.

Logic is also propaedeutic to sciences like physics and biology and even metaphysics, which was considered to study being as being (ontology) and God as the Supreme Being (theology). This made metaphysics the most encompassing field of knowledge, whereas the other sciences were more specialised. While

metaphysics studied being *qua* being, physics, for instance, studied natural phenomena, and biology studied living beings. Metaphysics has a stake in every science, given that it treats being in general. However, various key logical concepts occur in Aristotle's metaphysics, for logic, with its focus on deduction and methodology, came to be considered an indispensable tool that has to be mastered before studying the other sciences. The *Organon* examines the various aspects of logic, which stipulates what and how we can speak about things, and the method to be used, such as syllogism, as well as the relation between the principles and the hierarchy of the various sciences.

The *Prior Analytics* treats the various valid syllogisms. Invalid forms of syllogism and fallacies are expounded in *On Sophistical Refutations*. The *Posterior Analytics*, in turn, expands on the *Prior Analytics* to include what more generally constitutes scientific language, and addresses questions of human knowledge – such as whether knowledge comes from sense perception and how universals – general concepts – are formed in the mind. It also discusses the kinds of issues that form the syllogisms or demonstrations. Therefore, it has been argued that while the *Prior Analytics* tackles the formal aspects of syllogism and scientific discourse, *Posterior Analytics* studies the material aspects of language about science and demonstrative knowledge.

A valid syllogism entails a necessary inference, one which cannot be otherwise. Thus, necessary premisses lead to necessary, rather than possible or probable, conclusions. Demonstrative knowledge depends on principles that are true, but also immediately familiar and prior to the conclusions. This kind of knowledge is thus ultimately based on first principles which cannot in turn be proved. One such principle states that the whole is greater than the part. Aristotle insists on the importance of avoiding circular arguments in demonstration, as well as those involving an infinite regress.

Because premisses must be familiar and true, a demonstrative premiss cannot assume something and its opposite at once, whereas dialectic can do this. In addition, dialectic can use premisses that are refutable, and its inferences can be implicit rather than self evident.

Deduction, for Aristotle, presupposes what is immediately true and always the case, and therefore employs universals rather than particulars. There is no demonstration of the accidental, in other words, of that which is not always or necessarily attached to its subject. In this sense we can say, for instance, that there is no demonstration regarding the colour of an individual human being, because the specific colour is an accidental attribute, and varies among individuals.

Three elements that make up every demonstrative science are first, according to Aristotle, what it posits to be (regarding a certain genus, which is the subject matter of that science) – that concerning which the science proves; secondly, the common axioms or the principles on which the demonstrative science rests – that

from which it proves; and finally the attributes belonging to that genus – that which it proves.⁵

These three elements of demonstrative science are also listed in Averroes' *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, namely (1) the subject posited together with its essential accidents, then (2) the axioms (*qaḍāyā*), which are immediate and self-evident, and in which the predicates inhere, and finally (3) the predicates or attributes. Demonstration comprises thus the subject (*mawḍūʿ*), the axioms, that which is sought after (*maṭlūb*).⁶

These three elements are the principles of any given demonstrative science, the conclusion and the genus regarding which demonstration is made. These three elements appear here somewhat reformulated, as (1) predicate, which must be essentially tied to the subject, (2) premisses showing the existence of predicates to a subject, and (3) the nature, or genus, posited.⁷ He reiterates the prohibition of crossing over from one genus to another in producing a demonstration within one demonstrative science, although a lower-ranking science can prove the existence of the subject matter of a higher science, such as having physics prove the existence of God, which is the subject matter of metaphysics.⁸ Such a lower-ranking science proves the existence of the subject matter of a higher science because it is more specific and tied to matter and the particular, whereas the higher science furnishes the reason why.⁹ If both proofs are compared, the cause of something is provided by the higher science, and the existence by the lower science. In turn, dialectic is not concerned with a particular genus in its deductions. Moreover, dialectic may use opinions in its premisses, whereas demonstration does not, and entails no element of chance.

Aristotle dwells on the relation between definition (e.g., 'man is a rational animal') and demonstration, since a definition also renders explicit the attributes of a genus (e.g., animal), and its relation to its species (e.g., human). The definition does not itself demonstrate anything, but its close link with demonstration appears from the fact that it can be a principle or a conclusion of demonstration. However, there can be demonstration without definition.

There are different types of demonstration, including universal, particular, affirmative and negative; however, Aristotle privileges a universal and affirmative demonstration, for negation is only understood with reference to affirmation, and the particular is comprised in the universal, whereas the universal exceeds the particular. In addition, the particular is not as readily understood as the universal by the intellect. For this reason, when it comes to the various syllogistic figures,

⁵ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 76b11–16, pp. 114–66, p. 124.

⁶ Averroes, *Sharḥ al-burhān*, ed. A. Badawi (Kuwait: al-majlis al-waṭanī li-l-thaqāfa wa-l-funūn wa-l-ādāb, 1984) (henceforth *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Book I), pp. 311, 313.

⁷ Averroes, *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Book I, p. 279.

⁸ Ibid., p. 285.

⁹ Ibid., p. 370.

Aristotle associates demonstration primarily with the first figure, which is universal and affirmative, whereas the second figure includes negation and the third figure includes the particular. Aristotle highlights the fact that mathematics and the various mathematical disciplines use the first figure. More specifically, sciences should employ a demonstration as close as possible to the principle of that science. A demonstration is more robust if it rests on fewer principles, given that this ensures a lower margin of error. In the *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Averroes expands on these issues and states that demonstrations in the second figure do not produce definitions, given that they are not affirmative, whereas the third figure is affirmative but demonstrates particulars rather than universals. Only the first figure is autonomous, while the others depend on it.¹⁰

As we have already seen, there is a strong link between demonstration and the notion of cause and explanation. Therefore, demonstration produces immediate assent in the mind, although the issue of assent is not foremost in Aristotle's mind. A famous distinction made by Aristotle is that between demonstration of a fact/existence and demonstration of cause. The first simply shows that something is the case, the second also why it is the case. The link between demonstration and causality is thus buttressed. A process is only understood if the causal relations entailed in it can be grasped by the intellect.

Aristotle's rules for demonstration are stringent. One must not leap from one science to another, and one must remain within the same genus. Only universal premisses ought to be employed to ensure a demonstratively perfect result, to avoid any uncertain elements, and any particular elements should ideally not be part of the premisses. Consequently, it should come as no surprise when Aristotle states that not everything can be demonstrated.¹¹ It seems, in fact, that demonstration is only of a few select things, having limited applicability.

A major contribution to philosophy on the part of the Stagirite was the foundation of formal logic to test the validity of arguments. Aristotle's logic is characterised by the use of syllogism. Since this constitutes correct scientific procedure, does it mean that syllogism is only used in the demonstrative method? We find syllogistic reasoning also in dialectic and in rhetorical discourse. The difference lies, therefore, not primarily in the form of the syllogism, but in the matter that constitutes the premisses, and, consequently, the conclusion. This again attests to the formal correctness of dialectical and rhetorical language. A parallelism of this acceptance of dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms within an Islamic setting on the part of Averroes is not far to seek. Averroes' treatment of interpretation allows the use of syllogism with literal or metaphorical premisses and conclusion. Therefore, the fundamental distinction between these types of syllogism is not the form of the syllogism but the subject matter that constitutes the premisses.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 375.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 84a31.

The Commentaries on *Posterior Analytics*

The centrality of the question of demonstration is evidenced by the fact that Averroes wrote three commentaries on *Posterior Analytics*: a short commentary, followed by his middle and long commentaries. The *Short Commentary on Posterior Analytics* has been recently edited and translated into English by Charles Butterworth, in a forthcoming edition of this work.

The Short Commentary on Posterior Analytics

This short commentary stresses the inextricable link between demonstration and syllogism, whose premisses are essential, necessary, universal and certain.¹² Averroes identifies this kind of reasoning with absolute (unqualified) certainty, which implies a complete harmony between what we believe and the truth of the thing conceived. And there can be no change in our belief and certainty regarding it. Both the premisses and the conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism are unchanging. 'Universal' means here that each term of which something is predicated is seen from a universal perspective, as belonging to a certain genus or species, rather than to an individual. Essential means non-accidental. In demonstrative premisses the predicate can be the subject, in the case of genera, such as 'animal' as predicated of human being, or the other way around when predicating essential accidents of a subject.

For a necessary demonstration/definition it is important to use (for definitions) genera as predicated of species rather than accidents that are more general than the genus (of the art) in question, such as equal and unequal in relation to number, that is, predicates which do not serve to describe number adequately. The latter are general demonstrations, which are not as essential as the former. In demonstrations, it is important to use predicates that are closely related to the subject, such as 'rational' said of man, and which particularly characterise the subject.¹³ From among the necessary premisses that constitute a syllogism, some are primary intelligibles and others are obtained through syllogisms which employ primary intelligibles as premisses. The latter constitute the demonstrative syllogism.

Ultimately all conclusions derive from primary intelligibles. The universals present in these premisses can be obtained immediately and intuitively, such as the principle that the whole is greater than the part, or could be obtained through induction, that is, by comparing several particulars and discerning their common characteristic(s). Averroes explains that in this syllogism we look for the cause of something, or its existence, or both. This results in three species of demonstrative

¹² Averroes, *Averroes' Short Commentaries on Aristotle's Organon*, edited and translated, with an introduction, by Charles E. Butterworth (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming), henceforth, *Short Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, p. 218. I am grateful to Charles Butterworth for showing me this text in advance of publication.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

sylogism, the demonstration of cause and existence being the unqualified demonstration. There follows the demonstration of the cause and finally the demonstration of existence or by sign. Knowledge of existence may lead to knowledge of cause, and knowledge of cause presupposes that we are aware of the thing's existence.¹⁴ Primary causes are the most important and appropriate for demonstration. Strictly speaking, demonstration depicts the thing according to what naturally characterises it and can potentially turn into its definition. In addition, this kind of predication presupposes that causes should be predicated of their effects and of the accident of the thing of which they are predicated.¹⁵

Averroes stipulates nine conditions for demonstration: (1) it must be certain (2) it must be universal (3) it must be necessary (4) it must be predicated essentially (5) its premisses must explain the existence of the conclusion as well as our knowledge of the conclusion (6) it must be predicated in a natural way (7) the premisses must exist and be known prior to the conclusion (8) the premisses must be predicated in a primary way, and finally, (9) the premisses must be particularly characteristic. This applies to self-evident premisses (in which predication must be absolutely primary and not requiring further explanation, which is a tenth stipulation for this kind of premisses) or to those that are conclusions of other demonstrations. In these unqualified/absolute demonstrations, the middle term, which is shared by the premisses, should be cause of the major or the minor or both. (For instance: in 'all humans are mortal; all philosophers are human(s); therefore all philosophers are mortal', the middle term is 'humans'). The middle term can be also a definition of both extremes, one of them or part of them. Preferably, the middle term should define both extremes, otherwise the major (in this case 'mortal'), thirdly the minor (in this case, 'philosophers'). Averroes relies heavily on Alfarabi's analysis for his exposition on demonstration in this short commentary, although he is critical of some of Alfarabi's positions in the *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, as we shall see. Among the predicables used for defining something, we find for instance the genus ('animal' in 'man is an animal') or the differentia ('rational' in 'man is rational'), or also the particular characteristic (proper), or an accident – this points to the relation between these five predicables, as devised by Porphyry in his *Isagoge*. Averroes goes on to explain the relations between unqualified demonstrations through the relations between these predicables within the premisses. Negative and conditional demonstrations can be converted into affirmative and assertoric ones.¹⁶

If something posterior (like 'burning') explains something prior (like 'fire'), it is a sign, but if the prior is taken to explain the posterior we have an absolute demonstration (from cause to effect). But if the posterior does not always result from the prior, we can only have a sign; for instance, if smoke is taken to denote fire then this is a sign (because there can be fire without smoke). Thus we have four

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 224–5.

cases regarding the relation between prior and posterior: (1) the prior and posterior indicate the existence of each other conversely, or (2) and (3) one indicates the existence of the other, but not vice-versa; alternatively, (4) there is no causation between them, in which case no sign or demonstration is possible.¹⁷

In the demonstration of existence we can find two characteristics of a subject which can mutually imply each other – one being prior to the other – or not, and thus expand our knowledge of the subject. Certain characteristics are accidental rather than necessary, and the causal connection here pertains to the matter and the agent, because what follows from the end and the form is necessary.

Averroes then goes on to explain the meaning of definitions, which as we can see can constitute part of a demonstration. Definition differs from demonstration in being a sentence with a specific composition – a demonstration, however, asserts or denies. Averroes stresses the importance of using that which is prior to the thing defined, such as to say that man is a rational animal. Some definitions exist for what is defined and some of their parts exist for other parts, in which case they can be part of a demonstration as primary premisses. Definitions whose connection to the thing defined is not self-evident may be considered as conclusions of demonstrations. Both the genus and the differentia, respectively – for instance, 'animal' and 'rational' – can constitute starting points of a demonstration or its conclusion.¹⁸

In the *Short Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Averroes distinguishes three kinds of arts, the theoretical arts, the practical arts, and those that are used in both, such as logic. Each art, theoretical or practical, has its own specific set of premisses, problems and subject matter. However, there is something common to all demonstrative arts. Universal theoretical arts look into being in general, whereas particular arts study being in a specific way, such as the natural sciences.

Within the theoretical arts, Averroes further distinguishes the universal arts, which differ in the way of speculating: philosophy, dialectic and sophistry. These three arts differ not only in the way of speculating, but also in the principles, the end and the kind of knowledge provided. Philosophy, otherwise known as metaphysics, studies being as being, and the conditions in which being is found. It is built on certain principles and provides the highest possible knowledge of something that one can conceive. Its goal is to conceive the ultimate causes of beings, and in this human perfection is attained.

Dialectic aims at confirming or refuting the point at hand. It provides generally accepted knowledge, and its principles are likewise commonly accepted. Sophistry, in turn, is based on principles falsely assumed to be certain or commonly accepted. It misrepresents the truth, and a sophist gives a false appearance of wisdom. It does not provide knowledge as such. These here appear as separate from the practical sciences. However, Averroes states that the universal sciences overlap with the practical sciences, which are subordinated to the universal sciences with regard to

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 247–8.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 263.

their subject matter. Here Averroes does not mention rhetoric as such, focusing on sophistry in its stead.

In this short commentary Averroes also focuses on demonstrative discourse per se, dividing it into four kinds: for instruction and learning, for demonstrative objection, for inference and for examination.¹⁹ Knowledge is divided into concept and assent, and every actual knowledge derives from prior knowledge; such is also the case with regard to instruction and learning.

That which paves the way to assent is restricting the issue to two poles of the opposition (to which one can answer affirmatively or negatively), and what paves the way to concept is understanding the meaning of the noun at hand. The definitions bring about the concept. Instruction has three necessary principles: 'order, expression, and principles'.²⁰ Order implies starting with the simplest, by nature, on the one hand, or with the more commonly accepted and easiest – not unrelated to, and including, the analysis of a definition. Learning should be based on essential, not metaphorical, principles, and should not appeal to the imagination (which is out of place in demonstration). Substitution should not be used, except for the substitution of the noun by its definition, or the explanation in place of the thing being discussed. One can use a more common noun in order to make a point, or its opposite, or an example, but just for guidance, or division.²¹ One should avoid rhetorical or poetical discourse or an imitation of the term. An example of this misleading practice of loose expression is to say that form is masculine and matter feminine.

The principles of the arts include (1) self-evident, irrefutable premisses, such as the principle that the whole is greater than the part (2) hypotheses (for the untrained student), (3) postulates – those which take long to be understood and those which are conclusions and principles, in the science which explains them and the science which postulates them respectively – and (4) general descriptions that explain a noun, which if evident must be taken as premisses, and if not evident must be taken as hypotheses and postulates. Demonstrative objection is used by the one who thinks the matter as the opposite of what it is, and does not accord with the method of learning stipulated by demonstrative instruction and learning.

Error may occur in two ways in an art: where fundamental principles are denied, such as denying nature or motion in physics, or where something such as void is postulated. The things that can essentially lead to error are like denying an essential attribute of a thing, or affirming of it something that does not belong to it. Some are non-essential attributes, which may be true or false, and the false is affirmed of it.

Averroes argues that error can also occur through syllogisms, in which case both the syllogism and its conclusion ought to be rejected. Refuting simply the syllogism and not the conclusion is a rhetorical device, for refuting the conclusion

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 276.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 277.

²¹ Ibid., p. 278.

does not invalidate the syllogism (according to its form). Error can occur if the matter (information) contained in the syllogism is false. The demonstrative syllogism and the syllogism of objection can both be refuted by means of the contrary or contradiction.

Perfection in an art entails knowing its principles, being able to infer from them what is necessary, and eliminating the essential things that lead to error. In addition, one must be able to teach it.

The Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics

In order further to understand Averroes' conception of Aristotle's theory of demonstration, the *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics* (*Talkhīṣ kitāb al-burhān*), which predates the long commentary on the same work, and which is available in a modern edition of the original Arabic, requires our attention.

It is worth noting that the purpose of the short and middle commentaries was not so much to examine the fine points of Aristotelian philosophy as to introduce and give a solid grounding in the subject covered. It has been argued that Averroes often departs from the less than perfect Arabic translation of the original Greek, and produces a clearer text which seeks to elucidate the true meaning of Aristotle's words.²² The long commentaries are a more literal reading of Aristotle's text, whereas the middle (and short) commentaries were possibly intended not so much for advanced philosophy students, but as introductory manuals not only to Aristotle's thought but to the various disciplines that he founded, such as metaphysics or physics.

The *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics* hence sets demonstration within the wider context of other argumentative methods such as dialectic and rhetoric, and even sophistical arguments. At the start of his *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Averroes explains knowledge in general. He expands on what it means to know and argues that it always takes place through thought/reflection (*fikr*) and syllogism or reasoning (*qiyās*). An argument should in principle admit of formalisation by means of a syllogism.

Like Aristotle, Averroes asserts the chronological primacy of induction over deduction, since knowledge starts with sense perception and only later proceeds to deduction and abstract thought. The knowledge obtained prior to deduction and thought can be of two kinds, either through assent – that something exists or not – or knowledge 'of that to which the name of the thing points', which is called imagination or representation (to oneself). We thus observe that for Averroes one of the modalities of knowledge is tied up with imagination and the interpretation

²² For details and examples of the transformations introduced by Averroes, see Averroës, *Commentaire moyen à la Rhétorique d'Aristote*, vol. 1, pp. 14–16.

of a term. Not surprisingly, assent and imagination both refer at least initially to something actually existing and verifiable through sense perception.²³

In Averroes' overall interpretation of the Aristotelian conception of scientific knowledge, we find the same intention to explain how this knowledge is produced. In addition, a special concern for the production of assent in the mind is discernible. The choice of means to produce assent obviously depends on the recipient of the message. In the *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Averroes considers assent alongside another mental process, imagination (*taṣawwur*), whereby we represent in our minds that which the name of a thing denotes. Assent and imagination approximately correspond to knowledge of something's existence and of what its name indicates. Awareness of a thing's existence would seemingly precede understanding of the meaning of its name, for someone who is aware of the existence of something must needs know what the name indicates. Generally speaking, one knows through thinking, or an idea (*fikr*) or syllogism (*qiyās*).²⁴ In demonstration, which implies the use of inference through syllogism, every proposition must be either true or false. To assume otherwise is sophistry, which includes accidental knowledge – which is no true knowledge at all. False information enters sophistical syllogisms, which need not be true or false.²⁵ Sophists would argue that it is not possible to know through further principles, but Averroes argues that the intellect knows the principles of demonstration as well as the parts of the syllogism, which are known by themselves as self-evident. It is therefore not necessary to show the reputability of these premisses, because their

²³ The philosophers thus rely on the intellect rather than on the imagination for their study of God and creation. The distinction between the philosophers and the other classes has a justification in psychology, in the sense that the imagination is more tied to the body and is more likely to visualise and anthropomorphise, as opposed to the intellect: 'These other faculties [other than the rational faculty] – the nutritive, sensory, and imaginative faculties – are regarded as dependent upon and, to a degree, affected by physical, material reality, which includes both that which is external to the person and that which is intrinsic to the body in which the soul resides. These other faculties of the soul are thus implicated in material and individual reality in a way which the intellect, beginning with its initial stage of potentiality as the material intellect, is not', *Averroës Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*, critical ed., trans., notes and introduction Alfred L. Ivry (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), p. xxi. The human intellect abstracts the universals from particulars (*ibid.*, p. xxi), while the practical intellect is connected to the imagination (*ibid.*, p. 31). Averroes further defends the idea that imagination should not be identified with knowledge and intellect (*ibid.*, p. 104). The imagination depends on the body, and processes sense data; see Idoia Maiza Ozcoidi, *La concepción de la filosofía en Averroes: Análisis crítico del Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (Madrid: Trotta, 2001), p. 302.

²⁴ Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, critical ed. Mahmoud M. Kassem, completed, revised, and annotated, Charles E. Butterworth and Ahmad Abd al-Magid Haridi (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1982), henceforth *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, p. 34.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

self-evidence carries an immediate certainty. It is rather dialectic which employs reputable or well-known premisses. In turn, demonstrative premisses, as Aristotle had stated, must be necessary, and so eternal and unchangeable. The link between necessity and causality is stressed, for Averroes argues that to know necessarily is to know the cause, and if one does not know the cause one knows by accident.²⁶ Hence the principle of causation is central for any kind of scientific knowledge, and it is the philosophers who inquire into the causes of any event or process.

Averroes concurs with Aristotle that necessary knowledge comes with the cause that necessitates existence. So the cause of existence, if and when known, produces in the mind necessary knowledge, which cannot be otherwise. The causation that is observable in the world of nature between cause and effect is mirrored in the relation between premisses and conclusion, a leitmotiv that recurs in Averroes' theory of demonstration. Any valid inference or deduction mirrors causation in nature.

In order to obtain necessary and true knowledge, Averroes states that the premisses of a demonstrative syllogism must be true, primary, and not known through a middle term, that is, must be self-evident and known by themselves. There should be no middle term between the things affirmed and their opposites – no half-truths; nor should any opposites be posited in the premisses. The premisses should furthermore be better known than the conclusions – for the conclusion purports to provide new, mediated knowledge. Better known to the intellect is the simple and universal.²⁷ However, because we first begin to learn through sense perception, the sensible and sensory is in the first instance better known to us – or rather to our senses – where the process of cognition starts. Demonstration is then from primary principles that are not derived from any further principles. Averroes adds that demonstration commands certain assent through syllogism. If the principles themselves are immediate, they are not known through demonstration but are self-evident.

Averroes distinguishes a demonstration by sign and absolute demonstration. The latter indicates the proximate cause of something: for instance, one ought to say that fire was the cause of burning, and not God.²⁸ A further distinction is made between a demonstration that indicates the existence, and one that indicates the cause, the latter being considered more complete and thus preferable. Thus, the former uses premisses that indicate a remote cause, and the latter uses the proximate cause.

The premisses of a demonstration should be true to reality, and its terms should be always true and necessary, hence the predicates are to be essential and primary, and the premisses are necessary and essentially predicable of the universal.²⁹ For, according to Averroes, all that is necessary is essential and vice versa.

²⁶ Averroes, *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Book II, 471F, Abram.

²⁷ Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, pp. 38–9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Demonstration yields certain, necessary and unchangeable knowledge, produced by a valid deduction from true and necessary premisses. Other kinds of method may yield true but not necessary conclusions. To reach the demonstrative level it is certainly not sufficient that the information conveyed in the premisses be well known or reputable, although this would be acceptable in the other methods of bringing about assent.

Predication can refer to a single substance (such as the sun and the moon) and as such constitute particular predication, or it can refer to a whole species or genus and so constitute universal predication.³⁰ Naturally, universal demonstration is preferable, although particular demonstration cannot to be excluded. However, with regard to the obtainment of knowledge, in its connection with demonstrative knowledge, Averroes defends that inductive knowledge, the process of obtaining universals, is not by itself sufficient for the attainment of demonstration. There is no demonstration in the strict sense of perishable things, except accidentally, at a given time. To illustrate this point, he states that an eclipse is a one-time event, but a common universal nature underlies all eclipses – i.e., the same pattern/cause – so demonstration is not of this eclipse in particular, but of the mechanism that produces any and every eclipse.³¹ Demonstrations should occur within the same genus; thus, something that is always the case for minerals does not necessarily apply to the animal kingdom, and such a transfer would not constitute demonstration.

Averroes sums up the conditions for demonstration: it includes the issues that are posited, the premisses that one must admit and the predicates of that which is sought after. These conditions stipulate that we have essential predicates and that things are known within that genus (i.e., premisses should indicate if the predicate exists or not in that subject), and finally the posited nature should be the subject of the art in which something is demonstrated. The prohibition to move across genera in a demonstration had been established by Aristotle. Averroes goes on to state that sciences must keep to the same genus and the same sought-after and subject matter in order to share in the same demonstration. With regard to demonstration of cause and existence, if one science comes under the other, the one treating the higher genus shows the cause and the one in the lower genus proves the existence of the subject matter.

The conditions for producing demonstrative knowledge are well defined and limited, and therefore it is difficult to know in all cases if we have attained demonstrative knowledge.³² The *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics* takes pains to distinguish demonstration from dialectic, which is a useful but imperfect means of argumentation. Dialectic accepts affirming the opposite of what is stated.³³ The purpose of dialectic differs from that of demonstration, because it does not aim at confirming a specific subject or substance. In addition,

³⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

³¹ Ibid., p. 63.

³² Ibid., p. 69.

³³ Ibid., p. 40.

the conclusion of a dialectical inference may be drawn from essential or accidental issues. Error may enter dialectical arguments, especially because their absolute accuracy is not tested.

Averroes discusses other important aspects of the demonstrative argument, such as the three specific figures found in it. The first figure of a syllogism is affirmative and universal, and indeed the only one used by the mathematical sciences. Here we must recall that the mathematical sciences were broadly construed as including various disciplines and considering number under various aspects – for instance, music considers number as it exists in time. Averroes praises the exactitude of mathematical demonstrations, saying they are hardly matched by those of other sciences. Mathematics is valued for being wholly abstract from matter. Averroes states that the more remote from matter a science is, the more certain. Arithmetic is therefore more certain than music, which involves time and is potentially linked to matter, whereas arithmetic studies number *per se*. In addition, the simpler the principles of a science, the more certain – for instance, he argues that arithmetic is simpler than engineering.³⁴

However, he adds that practically all the sciences that indicate the cause use first figure syllogisms. Second figure syllogisms, which deny the predicate of a subject, do not produce a necessitating consequence, and third figure syllogisms yield particular rather than universal conclusions, which is a significant limitation, for the terms and conclusions of demonstration proper should all be affirmative and universal and not apply only to one individual. In addition, the first figure seems to be independent of the others; hence, it is the first figure that produces *par excellence* absolute demonstration.³⁵ Averroes further defends the significance of universality for demonstration and refutes those who defend the notion of particular demonstration – he appears to follow a stricter line in this regard even than Aristotle – for particulars are perishable and hence the knowledge thus obtained is not essential and necessary. Like Aristotle before him, he equates necessity with eternity as something that can never be otherwise. Therefore, particularity in an argument leads to accidental knowledge. At any rate, the universal encompasses particulars, so the demonstration involving universals also embraces all the particulars classified under that universal, such as a genus or species. When we know universals, we potentially know all the particulars coming under that classification. Knowledge of particulars, however, does not imply an immediate knowledge of universals. The example of a triangle is used, and explained also in the long commentary. To say that a triangle is a three-sided figure with three inward angles constitutes a demonstration, but to say the isosceles is a triangle is a particular demonstration – if one only knows the latter one does not necessarily know the nature of triangle in general. The universal is thus more apt to furnish the cause. The more universal a demonstration, the stronger it is. It is also important

³⁴ Ibid., p. 123.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

to have simplicity and affirmation, rather than complexity and negation, for the former are more closely linked to the universal and eternal.

For Averroes it is important to employ immediate premisses, which are essential. In them the predicates show the nature of the subject, and constitute the definition or part of the definition; otherwise the subject of the predicate is included in their definition.³⁶ If there is a close link between subject and predicate, it will be an essential rather than an accidental link, and the conclusion too will be essential.

Simplicity is valued in concrete instances. Premisses are simple if they are immediate, whereas non-immediate ones are composed. In turn, these primary, immediate premisses must have finite predicates. If the relation of the premisses is like the whole to the part, then we have an ostensive syllogism (*qiyās mustaqīm*), which is a natural syllogism.

Given that true demonstration is universal, that which happens by chance does not admit of demonstration, for those things do not happen always or for the most part, and are not necessary, whereas demonstration is of the necessary or of that which is possible for the most part, for instance something not falling outside the laws of nature. A conclusion drawn from premisses indicating something necessary is required. If it indicates something that occurs for the most part, then the conclusion also applies for the most part. In addition, there is no demonstration of information obtained by sense perception, given that the senses perceive individuals, which exist at a specific time and place, not eternally, whereas demonstration concerns the universal and that which belongs to individuals at all times. Consequently, there can be a demonstration of the process of an eclipse, and of human nature in general, but not of this particular eclipse or this particular human being.³⁷

In linking demonstration with the assumption of universality and foreseeable outcomes if the same conditions or circumstances are in place, Averroes' conception of causation in the natural world points to a defence of a system of laws of nature. Moreover, the senses do not perceive causality – rather, the intellect does. The senses perceive only 'this' eclipse but do not grasp that the same process is at work in other eclipses, even though it is by combining the different experiences of an eclipse that the intellect comes to understand the mechanism at work during each and every eclipse.³⁸ Demonstration relies on causality and a purely intellectual grasp, not on sense perception. The senses are an important starting point, as is observation, and indeed all knowledge which comes from induction or deduction starts from sense perception, but not in the final stage of producing an inference. Averroes does note, however, that if one particular sense is lost, then the knowledge linked to that sense is also lost.³⁹

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 111–12.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 126.

³⁹ Averroes, *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Book I, pp. 415–16.

Demonstration, unlike the other methods, does not posit an opinion – even a true one – as a working hypothesis, but only works from absolutely certain statements. For even a true opinion does not carry absolute certainty, as its objects are possible rather than necessary. In factual terms, necessary knowledge and opinion may concur, but they do not carry the same level of certainty and conviction.⁴⁰

The second book of the *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics* does not treat the general conditions for demonstrative knowledge, but rather details how such knowledge is to be obtained. In particular it explains how one is to know the existence as well as the cause of a given substance or event. The investigation is broadened to mention other causes than the efficient cause – also the end or purpose, and matter and form. In this domain, too, there cannot be demonstration of the accidental and of that which happens by chance, for this is not intended and does not have a definite cause. The causes investigated in the context of demonstration must be well defined and not accidental. They must always lead to the same effect, under the same circumstances. What happens by chance and fortune is rare, and is not found among the causes mentioned in demonstrations. It cannot serve as a middle term in a demonstration.⁴¹

Four things are discussed in this science of demonstration. Two are simple and two are complex. The former examine whether something exists absolutely, for instance whether the void exists, and also what it is that we know to exist. The complex consist in the analysis of whether a predicate exists in a subject and why, if this predicate exists for that subject (e.g., if the moon will be eclipsed tomorrow).⁴² The middle term furnishes the cause of existence in addition to indicating what something is. What is apt to be proved through demonstration cannot be proved by any other method.

Universality and Definition

There is a close link between demonstration and definition, as stressed by Aristotle. Averroes explains the difference between them, to the effect that a definition indicates that which belongs to a substance and proves it, thus resembling demonstration. The latter shows, moreover, things that are outside the substance. The middle term, which is shared by both premisses, is more specific than the major term, which is the predicate of the conclusion.

In addition, there can be no ambiguity in demonstration, wherefore no polysemic terms ought to be used, although this is admissible in dialectic.⁴³ Neither the conclusion nor the premisses should include any equivocal terms. The terms, then, both in a syllogism and in a definition ought to be univocal, and as

⁴⁰ Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, p. 133.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 160.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 137–8.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 174.

clear as they can possibly be.⁴⁴ Equivocal terms might lead one to think of many things that they are one and the same. Examples of ambiguous language are to say that the sea is the sweat or moisture (according to the Latin translators Burana and Abram, respectively) of the earth, gathered in its deep end, or that the law is the measure of acts and actions; for moisture does not give to understand the substance of sea water, except in relation to earth, and the same applies to measure in relation to the law.⁴⁵ In this passage Averroes stresses that since the dialectician avoids the use of ambiguous terms in definitions and demonstrations, this use is even less appropriate in demonstration, on account of a certain similarity between dialectical and demonstrative arguments. Terms and examples that are analogous or transferable ought not to be used. If one responsible for demonstration and definition is compelled to use these terms, the analogy should be a close one.⁴⁶ This, however, applies to things that are not sensed and not corruptible. It helps the intellect readily to understand the matter through the relation between those definitions and the more universal ones. With regard to the relation between the actual meaning and analogous expressions, Averroes offers a comparison to the effect that the common sense (which coordinates the actions of the five external senses) is like a centre to which the other senses, like the lines of a circle, converge. Using peripheral expressions helps the intellect grasp the matter at hand, because in spite of being peripheral, they lead to the centre. These definitions point to the true definition, and it is easier for the intellect to become acquainted with the analogy first, before encountering the true definition.

The Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics

Having expounded the concept of demonstration in the *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, it is important to explain significant aspects of Averroes' reading of Aristotle in his long commentary. As we have seen, the first book deals with demonstration in general, comparing it, for instance, with the dialectical method; while the second book looks more closely at the relation between demonstration and definition given their many similarities. Its analysis is much more detailed than that of the middle commentary, and we will focus on the ways in which it builds upon or differs from it.

Averroes states that logic can be considered as a tool – this being its proper use – but also as a science in its own right. What is expounded in it is used in the other sciences.⁴⁷ Moreover, what is known by demonstration is not the same as what is known through definition, for the former is more universal. While a definition indicates the essences of things, demonstration indicates the cause,

⁴⁴ Averroes, *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Book II, 526B, Abram.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Book II, 527D–E.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Book II, 527E–F, Abram.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Book I, p. 461.

being and accidents of a thing.⁴⁸ Definition is only accidentally found together with demonstration, in dialectic. However, demonstration and definition are closely connected, for 'when demonstrating what the triangle is, the geometer defines it'.⁴⁹ An absolute demonstration must additionally provide the cause.

Expanding on the causal relations obtaining in a syllogism, Averroes states that the cause is the middle term, which is shared by both premisses, and the effect is the major, which is the predicate of the conclusion.⁵⁰ Demonstration through the cause indicates why something is, otherwise it shows whether something is the case. Demonstration proper involves indication of the cause, and the proximate cause is more appropriately called the cause.

Perfect science involves knowledge of the cause. Averroes explains that 'if an eclipse is known by the interposition of earth, this constitutes perfect science, but if the fact that the earth is interposed is known through an eclipse, this does not constitute perfect science; if this is known so then by a science that deviates, or falls short of perfect science'.⁵¹ A substance can have several causes if it has many disparate attributes.

In underlining the stringency of demonstration, Averroes stresses its uniqueness, whereas for Aristotle dialectic can be a good preparation for demonstration. For Averroes, one does not need to know dialectic in order to learn demonstration.⁵² A perfect demonstration requires three aspects: (1) to know the existence of things we are demonstrating by knowing its cause, (2) to know that it exists by virtue of its cause, and know that this is its cause, and (3) that things cannot exist without that cause. Here he distinguishes between indicating that something exists (*quia*) and its cause (*propter quid*). To know the fact is to know existence before the cause. The former proceeds from the particular to the universal and is therefore not strictly demonstrative.⁵³ It is more appropriate to proceed from the cause to the effect than the other way around.

In the second book of the long commentary Averroes argues that the reply to the question 'what is it?' yields the causes and forms, and the reply to the question 'why?' involves providing the external causes – the most important of which is the final cause, but also the efficient cause. The two questions are interrelated. Each of the four causes – form, matter, end and agent – can be found as middle term of a demonstration.⁵⁴

Absolute demonstration indicates both the cause and the existence. It produces not just knowledge of the effect in the syllogism, but also how the effect is truly produced by its cause outside the mind. It replicates what happens in nature. The

⁴⁸ Ibid., Book II, 413A–D, Abram.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Book II, 450F, Burana. My translation.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Book II, 535B, Abram.

⁵¹ Ibid., Book II, 537C Abram. My translation.

⁵² Ibid., Book I, p. 170.

⁵³ Ibid., Book I, pp. 180–81, 207.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Book II, 477B Burana.

example provided states that we do not just know of fire because of smoke in a certain place, we also know that smoke comes from fire.⁵⁵ Necessary knowledge implies knowing ‘why’ as well as ‘that’.⁵⁶ A demonstration by sign (*quia*) is not absolutely demonstrative, for signs are not demonstrations. Here Averroes remarks that Avicenna had denied that demonstration through signs constitutes proper demonstration or yields certainty, for one must know the effect through the cause and not the other way around.⁵⁷ Demonstrative inference would proceed from fire, the cause, to smoke, the effect. The same applies within the syllogism, where the middle term must have an essential link to the major and the minor. In a syllogism, it is the middle term which effects the demonstration.

Only absolute demonstration brings about perfect assent, rather than recalling an object to one’s mind through images. In this long commentary the question of assent remains central, for demonstration implies not only an external utterance (*nuṭq*) but also internal belief. This stress on the question of assent mirrors debates on the status of faith, and the proclamation of faith, in the various medieval Islamic theology schools.⁵⁸

In the *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Averroes stipulates that the premisses of a demonstrative syllogism must fulfil various conditions: they must be true, self-evident, better known than the conclusion, and they must be the cause of the conclusion and correspond with the thing explained.⁵⁹ Some of these characteristics can be shared with other types of syllogism, such as the dialectical and the rhetorical, namely regarding the stipulation that the premisses must be better known than the conclusion.⁶⁰ The art of dialectic, in turn, is based on commonly known premisses that are not demonstrative or proved as such, and that yield no complete certainty.

If the principles of demonstration are not known by themselves, they must be known through demonstration, so that ultimately the principles must be self-evident, or known immediately by the intellect without recourse to demonstration. A primary demonstration is one relying on first principles instead of on a previous demonstration.

Demonstration only admits of one definition for each thing, whereas dialectic admits more.⁶¹ Unlike the demonstrative syllogism, the dialectic and the rhetorical syllogism do not yield absolute certainty. The certainty of a syllogism depends not only on the certainty it produces, but also on the ability to furnish a definitive proof of the knowledge in question. If the opposite of what is stated is false and rejected,

⁵⁵ Ibid., Book I, pp. 182–3.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Book I, p. 267.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Book I, p. 275.

⁵⁸ Robert Caspar, *Islamic Theology*, vol. II, *Doctrines* (Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 2007), pp. 18–19.

⁵⁹ Averroes, *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Book I, p. 183.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Book I, p. 198.

⁶¹ Ibid., Book II, 458A, Abram.

we have a demonstration; if it is admitted in some way, this constitutes a different kind of inference, dialectical or rhetorical.

In the *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics* Averroes states that the form (*ṣūra*) of the dialectical and demonstrative syllogisms is the same. In their conclusion both assert something to the detriment of its opposite, although, as we have seen, either of the opposites could be asserted in dialectic, given that its statements are not strictly necessary, but possible.⁶²

Distinguishing between the dialectical and the rhetorical syllogisms, Averroes states that if an agreement on the opposite of what it states is rare, then we have a dialectical syllogism; if it is equally possible, it is rhetorical or merely persuasive. He further argues that in the dialectical syllogism we rarely find the false, whereas in the rhetorical it can be equally found – in other words, there is a fifty per cent chance of the conclusion being false. Dialectic employs a particular syllogism, and both elements of the opposition are possible, although one is likelier than the other. In addition, and unlike metaphysics (*ḥikma*, philosophy, or first philosophy), which in this passage seems to be equated with demonstration, dialectic does not focus on one single subject but treats several, and its goal is victory in an argument. While metaphysics studies being *qua* being and the ultimate causes of existents, dialectic studies beings in so far as they are known (*mashhūra*), and in so far as they are handed down to us, or admitted by us.⁶³ The identification of metaphysics with demonstration in these passages appears from the comparison between metaphysics and dialectic, where metaphysics takes the place of demonstration. For dialectic, as well as demonstration, is a method rather than a discipline per se, and the implication here is that metaphysics carries the certainty of demonstration.

Regarding the question of proving the subject matter of a certain science, a contradiction could be seen to arise in the fact that, on the one hand, metaphysics has the highest principles and its principles are common to all sciences,⁶⁴ while, on the other hand, its subject matter, God, is proved by physics. Averroes argues to the effect that a particular science can indicate or signal its subject matter, but not prove it in an absolute way, furnishing both the cause and existence.

How do sophistical statements differ from this? Averroes claims that these are for the most part false, and only accidentally true.⁶⁵ Does the admission of possible falsehood in dialectical and rhetorical syllogisms contradict previous statements to the effect that there is only one truth and that the rhetorical and dialectical point to the same truth? One might argue on the basis of other works by Averroes that dialectic and rhetorical statements may not be strictly true if taken literally, but are always true if interpreted. Demonstrative knowledge or syllogisms, as we have seen, are only to be read literally, as there is no further meaning to be unveiled other than the explicit demonstrative statement. Demonstrative language

⁶² Ibid., Book I, p. 330.

⁶³ Ibid., Book I, pp. 328–9.

⁶⁴ Ibid., Book I, p. 298.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Book I, pp. 199–200.

is in no way metaphorical, but direct. Moreover, there is no demonstration of the accidental.⁶⁶ But dialectical and rhetorical language and syllogisms, as we have seen, are open to further interpretation, which means that even if the apparent meaning is false, the hidden meaning is true. This is not explicitly stated in the *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, but it can be gleaned in the light of his statements in the *Decisive Treatise*.

Demonstration implies not only knowing with certainty that something is true, but also being able to prove it, and to induce the same conviction in others. For it is distinctive of demonstration to show the cause, given that knowledge is knowledge of the cause as well as of existence. In the same way that the cause produces the existence of its effect, so in a syllogism the premisses are the cause of the conclusion. It is in perceiving the cause that we know the effect with certainty. Therefore, demonstrative knowledge is necessary, which means that it is eternal and cannot be otherwise.

How does demonstration stand with regard to the issue of mental assent? Demonstrative syllogism always produces assent without fail, whereas dialectical syllogism produces assent for the most part, and assent or lack of it are equally possible with rhetoric. Nevertheless, false statements or outcomes may not feature at all in dialectical and rhetorical utterances. They may all be true like demonstrative conclusions; therefore, Averroes states that, regarding falsehood, the division into demonstrative, dialectic and rhetorical is accidental, because falsehood is not necessarily found in any of those categories.⁶⁷ The *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics* stresses that demonstration is of the necessary. A cause necessarily produces its effect, as the premisses necessarily produce the conclusion, in a valid syllogism, thus leading to the mind's assent – but only demonstration does so necessarily and without fail.

If we read this information in the light of the *Decisive Treatise*, a demonstrative argument never fails to produce certainty, unlike the dialectical and the rhetorical, even if it is suitable for all people, and in spite of the fact that it does not fail to produce assent if understood. For the majority of people, the best dialectical or rhetorical arguments ought to be used, while the demonstrative class requires demonstrative, certain proof, for assent. The demonstrative would fail to bring about assent from the dialectical and rhetorical classes in virtue of its incomprehensibility, which, as we have seen, is based on two factors: its content is too spiritual for most people to grasp, and its method is too technical for most people to follow, based as it is on syllogistic logic.

That is not to say that syllogisms are not used in dialectic or rhetoric, but as Aristotle had explained and Averroes reiterates, rhetoric specialises in enthymemes, a type of syllogistic reasoning which omits a premiss, while assuming it. It is thus a simplified form of syllogism that can more readily be understood by the majority of people. In stating that demonstration produces certain and unailing

⁶⁶ Ibid., Book II, 461D, Abram.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Book I, p. 199.

assent on the part of those who understand it, Averroes explains that this is because what demonstration proves cannot be otherwise – it is eternal and does not change or alter.⁶⁸

Therefore, demonstration is more deserving of being called necessary science ('ilm) than anything else, since that which causes something of its kind is worthier of receiving that appellation. In the same way that fire is hot insofar as it is the foremost cause of heat, so is demonstration the cause of necessary science.⁶⁹

Averroes held Aristotle's work as containing the truth, and Aristotle himself as the greatest philosophical and scientific authority of all times. However, this did not stop Averroes from writing philosophical works – other than commentaries – in his own name.

His discourse is clearly demonstrative in the commentaries, but in his personal works he uses a more popular and accessible, non-Aristotelian vocabulary, while referring to the same doctrines. If he points to his commentaries for corroboration of his statements in the *Decisive Treatise* and the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, he implicitly shows the congruence between the two types of philosophical works. The different language used purports to address a readership acquainted with Aristotle's works and philosophy – since the purpose of the commentaries was to elucidate Aristotle's texts, whose terse style was considered obscure – as well as those unacquainted with philosophy.

Since demonstration strictly speaking goes hand in hand with universal knowledge, which includes the attributes or qualities of the substances we claim to know, predication is an essential element of demonstration. In some way or other, the predicate must enter into the definition of a subject and so be inextricably linked to it. Universal predication must be of everything in the subject, and must be linked to it essentially and not just necessarily.⁷⁰ Averroes berates Alfarabi for countenancing the view that premisses need only be true, when in fact they must also be essential, as must the middle term. In another criticism of Alfarabi, he states that there are no special or particular premisses involved in demonstration, as Alfarabi would have it. So the predicate must be essential and necessary (he illustrates this with the fact that snow is necessarily but not essentially white), and subject and predicate must imply one another.⁷¹

Naturally, conditional propositions are not part of the demonstrative method. Accidental predication is only considered acceptable if the accident is essential to the subject, and thus permanent. Conditional syllogisms are admissible in dialectic.⁷²

With regard to predication in demonstrative syllogisms, the *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics* had already confirmed these positions, namely that the predicate must be essential to the subject and always found with it, as well as being

⁶⁸ Ibid., Book I, pp. 256–7.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Book I, p. 257.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Book I, pp. 225, 229.

⁷¹ Ibid., Book I, pp. 245, 255.

⁷² Ibid., Book II, 433A–B, Abram.

an essential and primary attribute of the subject. Both the subject and the predicate of premisses, and the conclusion in demonstrative syllogisms, must conform to these rules. Unlike dialectical and rhetorical premisses, a demonstrative premiss does not admit of questions; only affirmative premisses are permissible.⁷³

In addition, as we have seen, no particular premisses are truly demonstrative. This means that the premisses should not refer to an individual thing or event. The example provided is that of an eclipse. Demonstration proper does not prove the existence of an individual eclipse, but rather the process underlying any eclipse.⁷⁴ Demonstration therefore proves the laws of nature, rather than explaining a particular, one-time phenomenon, unless it obeys a general pattern. As a result of the requirement of universality of the premisses, Averroes claims that there is no demonstration of perishable, corruptible things.⁷⁵

A demonstration implying individuals can only be found accidentally, not essentially, given that demonstration has a universal nature. If we come across a particular demonstration, or a demonstration of a particular event (or substance), this does not constitute absolute demonstration. Therefore, the further one is from matter and material objects, the more certain and demonstrative knowledge one possesses. For matter is that which individualises something. Something becomes individual by inhering in some matter. The particular, which is always composed of matter and form, is complex. Consequently, the simple is preferable to the complex when it comes to demonstration. Averroes also states that there is no demonstration through sense perception since the senses perceive only that which is particular, while the intellect apprehends the universal. Averroes, like Aristotle, defends the idea that knowledge starts with the senses and sense perception, but demonstration takes place when that knowledge becomes purified of the sensible elements and reaches universality.

Demonstrative premisses, which formally have to be better known than the conclusion they produce, as well as being true and self-evident, should also be universal, essential and primary. This means that they are not particular, or accidental, as we have seen, and should not derive from other propositions. If they do derive from other propositions, they ought to result from them by demonstration. This process cannot regress *ad infinitum*, but ultimately the premisses on which demonstration is based must be self-evident and not proved by any other propositions. Averroes further states that clearer knowledge results from knowing the proximate cause, rather than a remote cause. In the same way, primary premisses produce more evident knowledge than secondary ones, because the link is then more clearly seen.⁷⁶

It emerges from Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle's views on demonstration that it differs in various ways from the dialectical and rhetorical methods.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 52, 75.

⁷⁴ Ibid., Book I, p. 291.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Book I, p. 287.

⁷⁶ Ibid., Book I, p. 301.

Demonstration concerns the universal, eternal, unchanging. It would seem that material individuals and any being under the law of generation and corruption are excluded from demonstrative discourse. Thus demonstration would include God, eternal laws of nature and the celestial world, any other celestial beings, and mathematics. Particular or historical events that immediately affect humans would not be considered as a fitting subject of demonstration. Averroes further argues, drawing on the various figures of syllogism established in *Prior Analytics*, that the first figure is the one that properly suits demonstration, for it is both affirmative and universal. The second figure is not affirmative and the third figure is not universal. There can be syllogisms regarding negative facts or particulars, but they do not constitute absolute demonstration. The first figure is furthermore self-sufficient, and stands alone without the other two, as shown in the *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*.⁷⁷

The model for demonstrative knowledge is clearly mathematics, by Averroes' own admission – mathematical proofs use the first figure. As a result, mathematics is the truest of sciences through demonstration.⁷⁸ It provides absolute proofs, of cause and of existence. These demonstrations are potentially definitions.

He argues that from definition no syllogism ensues. In relation to demonstration, definitions are of three kinds: (1) as the conclusion of a demonstration, (2) as principles of demonstrations, and finally as definitions, which are (3) demonstrations of things that are not concurrently demonstrated by the syllogism but are known by themselves.⁷⁹

The premisses of demonstration constitute certain knowledge, whereas dialectical syllogism may contain commonly known, rather than certain, premisses. He further distinguishes the demonstrative syllogism from the rhetorical. A very common form of rhetorical reasoning, as we have seen, is the enthymeme, which omits one of the premisses (and so the middle term). Averroes explains that a syllogism that lacks the middle term does not constitute demonstration.⁸⁰

Demonstration, which unlike dialectic does not admit of questions in its premisses, further differs from both dialectic and rhetoric in that it has a specific subject matter, scientific or certain knowledge, and the means of attaining it, in the same way that logic analyses the validity or invalidity of speech and language. Dialectic, in turn, discusses any topic worthy of knowledge, and rhetoric seeks to achieve persuasion of an audience regarding any topic. Both dialectic and rhetoric do not specialise in a specific topic to the exclusion of others. Averroes reiterates that nothing is more certain or better than knowledge by demonstration. He states that something cannot be better known except through demonstration.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ibid., Book I, p. 376.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Book I, p. 374.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Book II, p. 473E–F, Abram.

⁸⁰ Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, p. 322.

⁸¹ Averroes, *Long Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, Book I, p. 464.

To conclude, demonstration, as evidenced by Averroes' commentaries on *Posterior Analytics*, relies primarily on syllogistic logic with regard to its form, and on necessary, certain, primary and essential knowledge with regard to its content. In practice, it is the preserve of philosophers alone, who are trained in the Aristotelian tradition and accept the laws of causality, in particular secondary causality, in the natural world and in human discourse. If we compare the three commentaries on this logical work by Aristotle, we find a growing stringency with regard to the rules underlying demonstration, particularly in the way in which Averroes insists on the universal character of the premisses and conclusions involved in and derived from demonstration.

We now turn to the commentaries on *Topics* and *Rhetoric* for an analysis of dialectical and rhetorical discourse in Averroes.

Chapter 3

Dialectical and Rhetorical Discourse in Averroes' Commentaries on Aristotle's *Topics* and *Rhetoric*

The Commentaries on *Topics*

In his work entitled *Topics* (where *topos* means place or location but can also mean procedure), Aristotle purports to describe a certain type of discourse that is parallel to, but distinct from, demonstrative discourse, which, as we have seen, constitutes valid deduction from indubitable principles. The work deals with the discipline of dialectic, not unrelated to the concept of dialogue that is characteristic of Plato's works, the dialogical method of seeking the truth with an interlocutor.¹ It consists in reasoning from reputable opinions (rather than indisputable first principles, as in demonstration), as stated by Aristotle at the opening of *Topics*. Like its demonstrative counterpart, it admits of deduction while relying on reputable premisses. Consequently, the conclusion of dialectical premisses is also reputable – that is to say, accepted by the majority of people – rather than indisputable. The premisses are considered contentious if they fail to be even reputable.

This formal discipline of discussion and argument has an important role, in spite of falling short of the requirements for indisputable deduction. Reputable signifies that they are acceptable to all or most people, or that they are accepted by the wise, including propositions that contradict the opposite of what is taken to be reputable. Opinions that accord with recognised arts are also within the domain of dialectic, as well as propositions on which people hold no opinion, or most people hold opinions that are contrary to those of the wise, or those held by the wise against most people. A dialectical statement should appear to be true always or for the most part.

In the second chapter of the *Topics*, and before proceeding, in the fifth chapter of Book I, to establishing the conditions for the dialectical method, Aristotle justifies devoting a study to the subject by listing the uses of this method, which

¹ In connection with the use of the polysemic term 'logos' in ancient Greek and its relation to dialectic, Frédérique Woerther remarks: 'The first sense, that of dialectic, was used for seeking and attaining the truth by means of Socratic argument (elenchos) and dialogue; a second, sophistic sense sought to flatter the listener with no concern for his welfare', in *Literary and Philosophical Rhetoric in the Greek, Roman, Syriac, and Arabic Worlds*, ed. Frédérique Woerther (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2009), p. 9.

can serve as part of an intellectual training, useful in casual encounters and in the context of the philosophical sciences.² The first use is connected to a 'plan of enquiry', the second allows one to learn and test people's opinions in their presence, rather than simply other opinions heard, making it easier to examine them. With regard to the philosophical sciences, Aristotle argues that its usefulness lies in the fact that it allows us to ponder both sides of a question and thus to test its respective strengths and weaknesses. A further usefulness lies in the possibility of discussing the principles of each science. Aristotle famously stipulates in the *Posterior Analytics* that the existence of the subject matter of a given science cannot be proved from within that science, but rather must be proved by another science. In this way, dialectic allows the discussion of those (primitive) principles and reputable views about those sciences, before proceeding to their formal proof. Dialectic is thus a preparatory discipline leading up to demonstrative discussions, as Aristotle states. In particular, it prepares the criticism of the principles of every enquiry. Like the other logical treatises, this work is very much about the use of language, in this case specifically in the context of a dialogue or debate and its linguistic components. It examines the arguments and the propositions employing topics or (common)places as the parts of a premiss. Like the *Prior Analytics* and the *Posterior Analytics*, this work builds on the conclusions of the *Categories*, which analyses the components of a proposition such as subject and predicate, as well as on the principles of *On Interpretation*, which analyses the various types of propositions. Indeed, many issues already discussed in these previous works, such as genus, property or accident or definition, resurface in the *Topics*, since they are important elements of dialectical speech. Definitions have a role to play in dialectical propositions.³ Other predicables, such as genus, and differentia are in turn closely connected to definition.

What are the similarities and differences between demonstration and dialectic according to Aristotle? Both use deduction, while dialectic also uses induction, and both tackle ethical, natural or logical issues. Ethical enquiries appear to be more properly discussed in dialectic than demonstration since the latter works from universal premisses. Aristotle's approach to the ethical virtues clearly departs from Plato's ethics, in that he does not seek definitions of the virtues and does not link virtue to knowledge alone.

Moreover, Aristotle appears to distinguish the dialectician from the philosopher when he states that the former is concerned with the order of the statements, while the philosopher is instead concerned with the content of propositions.⁴ Although the two disciplines overlap, there is a clear distinction between them. Like demonstration, dialectic can lead to the attainment of truth and knowledge,

² Aristotle, *Topics*, translated into English by W.A. Pickard-Cambridge, vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 167–277, 101a25–29, p. 168.

³ Ibid., 158b35–159a1.

⁴ Ibid., 155b4–10.

but specifically it contributes to choice or avoidance of something. In this way it appears to display a more practical aspect than does demonstrative knowledge. Dialectic can lead directly to the solution of a problem or contribute in that direction. In dialectic propositions may serve to find a universal by inductive means, or they can strengthen an argument or clarify it. This method should take into account the audience it addresses, such that deduction should be used among dialecticians, while induction should be used in addressing the majority of people.⁵

One could establish a parallelism between Aristotle's conception of necessity and possibility in *Physics* II and *Metaphysics* V (*Delta*), and the difference between the demonstrative and the dialectical methods: necessary is that which always takes place and does not fail to occur, it is that which cannot be otherwise. We find the necessary in the circular movements of the celestial spheres and, generally speaking, in the heavenly processes that never deviate from a set pattern. In turn, movements observed in the sublunary world of generation and corruption are uncertain and do not follow a constant and undeviating pattern, since they do not follow circular movement, which is more perfect than the other types of motion. In the same way, demonstrative propositions always yield certain and necessary conclusions and constitute certain knowledge. According to the *Metaphysics*, 'demonstration is a necessary thing, because the conclusion cannot be otherwise, if there has been demonstration in the full sense; and the causes of this necessity are the first premisses, i.e. the fact that the propositions from which the deduction proceeds cannot be otherwise'.⁶ The certainty provided by a complete demonstration relies on the certain content of the premisses as well as the employment of a valid syllogism, thus producing certainty at the level of both the content and the form of the process.

The possible is that which may or may not obtain, and sometimes happens, sometimes not. Dialectical propositions are based on reputable, rather than certain, knowledge. In this way does Aristotle define the art of dialectic with regard to the demonstrative method. Equally, dialectic is not to be confused with rhetoric, as we shall see. For Aristotle, the dialectical method is part of the philosophical disciplines, ranking below demonstration with respect to the certainty of its premisses and conclusions, but it is an important tool in the discovery of truth and expansion of knowledge and can thus be of assistance as a supporting tool to demonstrative knowledge. On its own it does not constitute scientific discourse. It employs common aspects of logic, such as definition, genus and species and differentia, and syllogism, though not absolute demonstration.

The somewhat different roles of dialectic in the *Decisive Treatise* and Aristotle's *Topics* are based on different emphases with regard to the subject of dialecticians and their intended audience. Aristotle brings up the issue of the wise as opposed

⁵ Ibid., 155b20–24.

⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, translated into English by W.D. Ross, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 1552–1728, V, 1015b6–9, p. 1603.

to the majority of people, and dialectic certainly aims at providing a platform for dialogue between these two groups. However, that which in Aristotle appears as a distinction between the learned in philosophy and the unlearned becomes more accentuated in Averroes, with his different classes displaying more rigid boundaries.

Furthermore, Averroes' three classes are clearly set within an Islamic context, namely his native twelfth-century al-Andalus. The demonstrative class represents the philosophers. Al-Andalus had a strong and established tradition of philosophical production such as to warrant setting the philosophers as a separate class of scholars, constituted by those who studied the philosophical curriculum and composed books of philosophy, such as Ibn Bajja and Ibn Tufayl, both of whom preceded Averroes in this field. The dialectical class does not seem to constitute a separate class in Aristotle, or at least it is not so strictly defined. For Averroes, this is the class of the Islamic theologians. In Aristotle, but not in Averroes, those availing themselves of the dialectical method would include philosophers. In any case, dialectic could build bridges between the philosophers and other people. In a certain sense, Aristotle thought that dialectic could be used by any citizen, while in Averroes' estimation it was somewhat too specialised for the general public. And while rhetoric appears to have a political dimension in Aristotle, particularly in a democratic society where various and opposing ideas are defended, it functions mainly as a religious education tool for Averroes.⁷ It is in this sense that it can also have a political dimension, given that religion informs the social interactions between the different classes as well as shaping the individual behaviour of citizens.

Let us now turn to Averroes' commentaries on *Topics* to assess his understanding of Aristotle, as well as his adaptation of this important work to his own context, quite different from that of Aristotle's fourth-century-BC Greece.

The title of the work *Topics* was translated into Arabic as '*jadal*', which in this context means 'debate' or 'dispute'. This is an Arabic term, which, as we have seen, occurs in the Qur'an, in reference to preaching the Islamic faith to unbelievers (16:125). Averroes plays on the ambiguity of this term with its strong religious as well as philosophical connotations, showing that this kind of method is not unlike the debates with unbelievers described in the Qur'an.

Averroes wrote two commentaries on Aristotle's *Topics*, a short commentary and a middle commentary. The *Short Commentary on Topics* has been translated into English by Charles Butterworth.

⁷ Michael Blaustein succinctly makes this point: 'Averroes, following the path of his Aristotelian predecessors within the Islamic tradition sees rhetoric primarily as a mode of discourse used by the philosophical elite in addressing the multitude about theoretical and theological subjects. For Aristotle, on the other hand, rhetoric is above all the mode of discourse used by political leaders with each other and with the multitude in public deliberations about policy', Michael Blaustein, 'The Scope and Methods of Rhetoric in Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Rhetoric*', in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Muhsin S. Mahdi*, ed. Charles Butterworth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 262–303, p. 262.

As Butterworth notes in his introduction, other short commentaries, such as those on *Prior Analytics*, *Categories* and *De Interpretatione*, pave the way for the study of demonstrative reasoning, laid out in the *Posterior Analytics*. What distinguishes these three treatises, the short commentaries on *Topics*, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, the first two of which are examined in the present study, is their relation to apodeictic (demonstrative) reasoning – they have a persuasive force that is contextualised by Averroes. As he states, ‘while the other treatises are recommended because they teach how to reason correctly, these three treatises are presented as providing ways of imitating or abridging correct reasoning in order to influence other human beings in any number of situations, but especially with regard to political decisions and religious beliefs’.⁸ While following the spirit of Aristotle’s treatises in their scientific context, Averroes here assesses and highlights their relevance to his context, where Islam shaped society and politics, and where politics and religion were inextricably linked.

The Short Commentary on Topics

The *Short Commentary on Topics*, which precedes the middle commentary, presents similar arguments to those found in the middle commentary, but in a more succinct fashion.⁹ In the middle and especially in the short commentary, Averroes’ particular contribution in expounding an Aristotelian discipline is apparent.

As in the middle commentary on the same work, he stresses the concepts of concept/representation and assent, which acquire in the *Decisive Treatise* a markedly religious as well as political tone. He distinguishes that type of assent from demonstrative and rhetorical assent. In a certain way, demonstrative assent differs from the other types because it occurs inevitably once a person understands demonstrative syllogism. The kind of assent provided by demonstration is unailing, whereas the one provided by dialectic is suppositional. As Averroes states, ‘in general, supposition is believing that something exists in a particular kind of way, while it is possible for it to be different than it is believed to be. Therefore, its peculiar characteristic is that it may be eliminated through opposition; demonstration differs in that it has the peculiar characteristic of not being eliminated through opposition’.¹⁰

The differences between demonstration and dialectic lie in the format of the syllogism, as well as in the elements that constitute the premisses. The format

⁸ Averroes, *Averroës' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's 'Topics,' 'Rhetoric,' and 'Poetics'*, ed. and trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 19.

⁹ Butterworth states that ‘Averroës *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Topics* was not completed until 1168 C.E., whereas this *Short Commentary on Aristotle's Topics* is thought to have been completed prior to 1159 C.E.’, *ibid.*, p. 116, n. 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

of the syllogism must be sound, otherwise the syllogism will be sophistical.¹¹ In fact, Averroes accepts more figures for the dialectical than for demonstrative syllogisms.

Then if these syllogisms were enumerated in this manner, there would be twice as many types of dialectical syllogisms as demonstrative syllogisms. That is because with [dialectical syllogisms] no attention is paid to whether a predicate is made naturally or essentially.¹²

Moreover, opinion plays here an important role, in contrast to the higher, demonstrative method, for dialectical premisses are believed or assented to because of the concurrence of most or all people, not because the matter at hand is irrefutable. He goes on to state that ‘with demonstration, we arrive at assent which is certain through our assenting to premisses because to our minds they appear just as they are externally, not because they are someone else’s opinion’.¹³ It may be thought that dialectical premisses are generally accepted because they are true or bear some semblance to the truth, but the appearance of truth is the decisive aspect in producing assent, whereas demonstrative truth is necessary in itself. This means that through dialectic two opponents can legitimately defend opposing views, and dialectical premisses may even be partially false, which does not happen with demonstrative ones. It becomes apparent why dialectic involves more topics and syllogisms than demonstration, because there may be many different opinions on one issue, but only one essential truth. This can be seen as an advantage of dialectic, as it accommodates more premisses than demonstration, which is a stricter logical art. Not everything is a matter of demonstration, and on this account the range of things that are demonstrable is much more limited than dialectical opinions, especially because, as we have seen, the dialectical may countenance the defence of an opinion as well as its opposite. In line with the *Middle Commentary on Topics*, induction plays an important role in providing information that forms the dialectical premisses. The universals are attained through particulars by induction. The results obtained through induction are limited since it does not help if a problem is entirely unknown.

The short commentary also distinguishes the different types of generally accepted premisses, such as those accepted by everybody, including different nations; the example given here is respect for one’s parents. This Averroes considers to be the highest form of assent within dialectic. Furthermore, ‘some of them are generally accepted by most people, without there being any disagreement among the rest about that’.¹⁴ Some may be accepted by learned and wise men, or

¹¹ Ibid., p. 48.

¹² Ibid., p. 54.

¹³ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

the practitioners of arts, or those skilled in them, or most of these without the rest disagreeing with them. In dialectic a greater consensus is the desired end.

The Middle Commentary on Topics

The *Middle Commentary* is available in three Arabic editions, two of which were published in Cairo by the General Egyptian Book Organization (the first by Charles Butterworth, in 1979, and the second by Muḥammad Salīm Sālim, in 1980) while the third, by Gérard Jéhamy, appeared in Beirut, published by the Publications de l'Université Libanaise in 1982, under the title *Averroès, Paraphrase de la logique d'Aristote*. In what follows, we will refer to the former two, complete, editions of this commentary.

Averroes, as is his wont in this kind of work, offers a presentation of the subject which is true to the subject as expounded by Aristotle, while interpreting it in a way that resonates with his historical context.

Averroes opens this middle commentary by stating that the dialectical syllogism is based on reputable or well-known (*mashhūr*), rather than certain, premisses. Furthermore the uses of this art include practice and exercising (presumably for demonstrative reasoning), discussing with the crowd/multitude (*jumhūr*), and as preparation for the speculative sciences.¹⁵ Therefore, dialectic is useful for philosophers and for the multitude, and in fact helps to bridge the gap between the two groups.

In addition, the study of dialectic, which has its own specific rules, serves to test ideas, to distinguish the true from the false in the context of a dialogue or discussion. One striking characteristic which surfaces at this juncture is the differentiation of dialectic from philosophy proper. Dialectic can be seen as part of philosophy, in the sense that it prepares for the study of demonstration. On the other hand, it falls short of the certainty and universality of demonstration, which is the hallmark, measure and height of philosophical achievement.

Dialectic prepares for the speculative, truly philosophic sciences, but it appears to be quite different from them, perhaps more so than in Aristotle. This comes as no surprise, since the *Decisive Treatise* also clearly separates the practitioners of these arts, namely the philosophers and the theologians. To that end, he states in the *Middle Commentary on Topics* that dialectic only prepares for philosophy, but is not part of it – thus excluding it from the philosophical sciences proper: 'It is clear that the exercise intended by this art only prepares for philosophy, in the same way as exercising by riding horses in contests is a preparation

¹⁵ Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-jadal*, *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium Medium in Aristotelis Topica* [*Middle Commentary on Topics*], edited, introduced and annotated by Charles Butterworth, with the assistance of Ahmad Abd al-Magid Haridi (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1979), henceforth *Middle Commentary on Topics*, p. 31. See also Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb Aristūṭālīs fi-l-jadal*, edited and annotated by Muḥammad Salīm Sālim (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1980), p. 7.

for war'.¹⁶ For both Aristotle and Averroes dialectic can be a propaedeutic discipline in preparation for demonstration, but while in Aristotle dialectic might still be considered to belong in the domain of the philosophical disciplines, for Averroes it appears to rank lower than philosophy (*falsafa*) strictly speaking. Bearing in mind the description of dialectic and its practitioners in the *Decisive Treatise*, we find that the theologians were not necessarily trained in the philosophical, Greek, sciences. Furthermore, in the *Decisive Treatise* philosophy is associated with demonstration, while the dialectical method and class are associated with the theologians and their own principles. However, notwithstanding the fact that philosophers studied the art of demonstration, with its own specific syllogisms, they were also supposed to know the art of dialectic and the art of rhetoric in order to be able to communicate with any kind of audience.

In spite of this, the *Middle Commentary on Topics* defends a close association between dialectic and demonstration. It is useful for studying science, for it allows one to test a proposition as well as its opposite, thus facilitating the discovery of the truth, something impossible with demonstration, which only presents certain truth and does not allow for exploration. As in the practical sciences, Averroes argues, the premisses of a dialectical syllogism 'are not wholly false or wholly true' – unlike the premisses of a demonstrative syllogism – adding that one could find essential and accidental elements together in physics, metaphysics and politics, but not in mathematics.¹⁷ Another indicator of the close link between the two arts is that it is superfluous to debate profitably a question in dialectic if the demonstration of the same topic is close at hand or far removed, or if no premisses confirm or deny the issue discussed.¹⁸

In general, dialectic allows one to consider and discuss that which is reputable, and its premisses should contain that which is neither obvious to everyone nor wholly obscure.¹⁹ A known statement which admits of questioning can be included in the premisses to become a part of the syllogism. Examples of this are issues known to everyone, e.g., God's existence ('God exists'), or issues known by most people and not disputed by others; one could add to this list issues known to the wise (the '*ulamā*', a term with religious connotations used to signify the class of Islamic religious scholars) and philosophers, without the disagreement of the majority or the rest of the people.²⁰ An example of the latter would be the survival of the soul after death.

The knowledge included in the premisses can be attained by experience in either the speculative or the practical arts. That which is similar or opposite to the well known is also well known. Here we find further indication that dialectic

¹⁶ Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Topics*, p. 31 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 8). All translations of this work are mine.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 32 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 11).

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 46 (ed. M. Sālim, pp. 42–3).

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 42 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 31).

²⁰ Ibid., p. 43 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 32).

ranks below demonstrative science, because what is known to all is better than what is known to most people. Yet the demonstrative syllogism would draw the immediate indisputable assent of all – if all classes were able to grasp it. In some ways dialectic requires confirmation by the demonstrative art, such that it does not stand on its own, as appears from Averroes' claim to the effect that dialectic is that 'whose truth is not known by itself in relation to something reputable, while doubt is attached to it with regard to the reputable'.²¹ Furthermore, just as Aristotle envisages the use of this discipline as a means of communication and understanding between various groups of people, namely the wise and the multitude, Averroes also highlights this role of dialectic.

It is important to stress a concept that runs through the *Decisive Treatise* but also appears in this middle commentary, namely 'assent'. As Butterworth rightly points out in his study, there is an emphasis on the concept of assent, which is preceded by imagination (*taṣawwur*), the representation of the concept in one's mind. In order to accept a proposition or concept, one has first to form an idea, in other words to grasp its meaning, and then assent to its truth. In fact, Butterworth distinguishes four elements: (1) a preliminary stage aiding the formation of a concept in the mind, (2) that which produces a given concept, (3) that which prepares one for assenting, and finally (4) that which leads to assenting.²² This term had a philosophical significance which was drawn from Stoic philosophy.²³ However, it is also Qur'anic and thus firmly rooted in Islamic theology, as 'an act of intellectual adherence to the truths of the Qur'an'.²⁴ Thus 'assent' in the Islamic period is closely tied up with the question of faith as understanding and acceptance of the Qur'anic revelation. It therefore takes on a predominantly religious sense, which the purely philosophical term lacked, especially as closely related to scripture and revelation in the Islamic tradition. For Averroes this is one of those felicitous instances where the philosophical and the religious language converge. This religious overtone is even more apparent in the *Decisive Treatise*,

²¹ Ibid., p. 44 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 36).

²² 'Averroes introduced a new ordering of the art of logic in these treatises. He first identified concept (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*) as fundamental terms, and then explained that instruction about each had to proceed from that which prepares the way for it (*al-muwāṭṭi' lah*) and from that which brings it about (*al-fā'il lah*). This meant that the art of logic fell into four parts: (i) that which prepares the way for a concept, (ii) that which brings a concept about, (iii) that which prepares the way for assent, and (iv) that which brings assent about. Averroës's discussion of words and of Porphyry's account of the predicables corresponded to the first part, while his commentary on the *Categories* corresponded to the second part'; *Averroës' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's 'Topics', 'Rhetoric', and 'Poetics'*, p. 12.

²³ See Averroes, *Averroes' Tahāfut al-tahāfut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, trans. Simon van den Bergh, 2 vols (London: Luzac & Co., 1954), vol. 2, p. 1. [note] 1.

²⁴ Robert Caspar, *Islamic Theology*, vol. 2, *Doctrines* (Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 2007), p. 9.

which states that the goal of all the three disciplines – demonstration, dialectic and rhetoric – is to bring about assent to the fundamental truth of the Islamic faith, such as God's existence, the afterlife and the prophetic missions. This then is the goal of dialectic, and it serves to link the various classes together, allowing them to converge at the religious level.

Averroes claims that dialectic serves to mediate between the testimony (*shahāda*) of the philosophers and those of the masses, and more specifically it can be used between philosophers with differing opinions and members of the crowd having divergent opinions among themselves, or in cases where the philosophers happen not to go along with the majority opinion.²⁵ An example of such possible divergence of opinions is that philosophers believe that it is preferable to lead a virtuous but difficult life without being influential, than a comfortable life filled with public honours but no virtue.²⁶ However, these opinions should constitute 'right' opinion rather than being mere falsehoods. Those opinions that are the exception, or that are arbitrary or false, have no place in this art.²⁷

Since dialectic deals with opinions rather than absolute certainty, which is the domain of demonstration, there is much room for debate and dispute, even among the philosophers. Averroes here cites the sophist Protagoras as representing an extreme respect for opinions, and as favouring the view that things exist in so far as they are believed. Philosophers should therefore be acquainted with dialectic because it helps them to relate to other people. It also assists in bringing about assent, this being the goal of the demonstrative and the other disciplines, and specifically for Averroes inducing belief in the Islamic doctrines.

In spite of having different starting points – certain knowledge in demonstration, right opinion in dialectic – these arts share a common goal. The particular adaptation of Aristotle's work to Averroes' context is seen in the latter's emphasis on the question of persuasion and assent, especially in religious matters. In addition to the stipulation that dialectic concerns reputable or well-known matters, he places a limit on what is acceptable to discuss, alluded to in Aristotle, but emphasised by Averroes: it would be wrong, for instance, to dispute whether God is to be worshipped or not. Nothing that is harmful rather than useful finds a place in this art. Thus, one should debate only what is useful within practical philosophy, speculative philosophy or logic.²⁸ In speculative philosophy – where, just as in practical philosophy, the obligation of worshipping God is self-evident – it is not useful to discuss whether sensibles may lead to truth or not, or whether accidents are stable (a theory disputed by the theologians), or whether every proposition admits of affirmation or negation. Here we find a recurring criticism of the theologians, which was already to be found in the *Decisive Treatise*, in particular Averroes' point that one should not discuss issues that are not useful or

²⁵ Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Topics*, pp. 44–5 (ed. M. Sālim, pp. 36–7).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45 (ed. M. Sālim, pp. 37–8).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 39).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46 (ed. M. Sālim, pp. 40–41).

are harmful for the majority of believers, or go against philosophic wisdom and the first principles set by demonstration – in this latter case the logical principle of the excluded middle (which stipulates that a proposition is either true or its negation is true, but not both).

The basic rules of dialectic are reiterated later in this middle commentary, when Averroes excludes from the dialectical method the discussion of what is repugnant to a group, for instance to say that God does not exist, or that opposites are one (as Heraclitus stated of good and evil).²⁹ He further defends the use of syllogism in this discipline, although it may render it difficult for the multitude to understand the conclusion.

Averroes then proceeds to the technical aspects of the dialectical method. He states that it admits of induction and syllogism, the two principles of dialectic. Once attained through induction (comparing and realising the similarities between similar particulars), the universal should be the reference, rather than continuing to refer to a particular. Moreover, induction can be employed in two ways: to verify the universal premiss in a syllogism, and to verify the sought-after (*maṭlūb*). Averroes concedes that, in dialectic, induction (attaining a universal through the particular) is more useful for the persuasion of the masses than is syllogism, especially if one is relying on sensible data. On the other hand, while using syllogistic logic, a legitimate part of the dialectical method, may prove difficult in persuading the multitude, it is more difficult to refute. This middle commentary insists that dialectic envisages two kinds of utterance, induction and syllogism, and that induction confirms the premisses.³⁰

Premises used in dialectic are drawn from a variety of sources, including examined opinions drawn from the multitude, different disciplines, and all the philosophers, including the better known among them. Opinions debated in dialectic should also be drawn from books, and all opinions should be compared with their opposing views, in what appears to be a comprehensive method of gathering all views. This should be done within each discipline, for example in ethics, physics and logic.

Further details are provided regarding the means that lead to the dialectical syllogism, one of which is obviously the ability to procure the premisses. In addition, the nouns and grammar employed must be examined and distinguished. Also, it is important to infer the differences, and to investigate any similarities.³¹ In analysing the relation between the different terms and in finding a common noun, one obtains clarity and agreement (between premisses) and avoids errors in the syllogism. The meaning of the words used must have some relationship to the popular (*jumhūrī*) meaning.³² This ensures that it will be understood by the multitude.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 222–4 (ed. M. Sālim, pp. 428, 430–31).

³⁰ Ibid., p. 216 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 415).

³¹ Ibid., p. 49 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 46).

³² Ibid., p. 63 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 77).

If the topics discussed are known and necessary, we have a demonstrative syllogism; if reputable, we have a dialectical syllogism; and if they are plainly false, this is a sophistical syllogism.³³

Averroes limits the range of possible questions in dialectic. Appropriate are questions that admit of a simple reply, 'yes' or 'no', such as the question 'Is the world created or not?' or 'Is man is a rational animal?'. Universal questions, such as 'What is man?', or 'In how many ways is something said?', should not be tackled dialectically. Dialectic can furnish the answer to questions pertaining to the beautiful, or the useful or pleasant, such as in how many ways the good is said, but always, as Averroes states, in seeking a 'yes' or 'no' reply, such as: 'Is man a rational animal or not?' and 'Is the good said in such and such a way?'. If such a question is not available, it would be permissible to ask, for instance, 'What is the definition of man for such a person'? And there is no point in elongating the question beyond what is required.³⁴ Other limitations when asking questions include the impossibility of disproving certain things: (1) the first principles of knowledge in the arts; (2) terms that are very far removed from the first principles (e.g., whether the soul survives); (3) things that are proximate to the principles; or (4) things whose expression is equivocal (*bi-ishtirāk al-ism*) or borrowed (*musta'āra*). Asking whether the world is eternal would be in this latter category, because 'world' is equivocal.³⁵ In this way, Averroes indirectly states that this question should not be addressed in this art but in the art of demonstration. This is why dialectic remains in the domain of reputable, renowned opinions, because other matters involve further premisses and studies.

Averroes stipulates the conditions for questioning and answering, here, for those training for the art of demonstrations, not for those wishing to win an argument.³⁶ The difference between this art and rhetoric then becomes apparent, in the sense that dialectic is more closely assimilated to demonstration and has, as we have seen, a propaedeutic role in relation to demonstration. Dispute for its own sake, with the single aim of winning an argument or refuting the opponent's argument, regardless of the truth or reputability of the answer, is not the goal of dialectic.³⁷ Those whose aim is to learn, on the other hand, deal with true premisses. Among the things that are repugnant to all are the claims that God does not exist or is not powerful.

Examples are used to elucidate in dialectic, while in the poetical art they are used to bring about poetical assent.³⁸

The classes that use the different types of premisses and syllogisms are different. These are mentioned at the end of this middle commentary. Averroes

³³ Ibid., p. 78 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 104).

³⁴ Ibid., p. 218 (ed. M. Sālim, pp. 419–20).

³⁵ Ibid., p. 219–20 (ed. M. Sālim, pp. 421–3).

³⁶ Ibid., p. 221 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 425).

³⁷ Ibid., p. 222 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 426).

³⁸ Ibid., p. 212 (ed. M. Sālim, p. 408).

considers here three classes. The sages, or wise men, or philosophers always assent to what is good in itself, such as virtue, and the best of two opposites. Then come the dialecticians, who choose the better of two opposites for the most part, but sometimes choose the reproachable, and finally the sophists, who are not looking for the truth but simply seeking to persuade and who choose the worse of two opposites. This division differs from the one propounded in the *Decisive Treatise*, where rhetoric is placed between dialectic and sophistry.

The *Middle Commentary on Topics* provides further details about the uses of dialectic and its practitioners. In line with Aristotle, Averroes states that this art does not attain to the certainty of demonstration, but it can be useful. For certain questions, such as ethics, it can be used, whereas demonstration is inadequate because it deals with universals and unchangeable, universal truths. In addition, like Aristotle, Averroes defends the idea that dialectic allows for discussion and debate about issues that are not certain but are well known and paves the way for the practice of other questions. It has then a propaedeutic value, and it serves both philosophers and other people. Non-philosophers can discuss non-demonstrative questions in this way, and find some common ground with philosophers, while it allows the latter to prepare for the study of demonstration. As regards his own understanding of the relation between demonstration and dialectic, we see that Averroes emphasises the significance of representation and assent in one's mind, a theme clearly evoking the religious significance of these concepts in the *Decisive Treatise*.

If we further explore the connections between the two works, we notice that in both works representation has a religious as well as a philosophical significance. This makes the identification of the theologians with the dialectical class less surprising in the *Decisive Treatise*, which is more critical towards dialectic than the commentaries on *Topics*.

It is important to recall that there was no such discipline as demonstration or philosophy as part of the Islamic sciences, although dialectic (in the sense of *kalām*) did exist and was an important contributor to Islamic knowledge. In relating and ranking demonstration and dialectic in relation to one another in the *Decisive Treatise*, Averroes seeks to introduce this new science, demonstration or philosophy, into the Islamic sciences. Moreover, theology or dialectic dealt with issues that touched on metaphysics, as the study of reality and of God, such as his nature and his attributes, his actions, and creation. However, dialectic, as affirmed in the *Decisive Treatise* and the commentaries on *Topics*, remains at the level of probability and possibility, whereas philosophy and demonstration proper are certain. The subject matter of both disciplines may overlap. We know this from the fact that dialectic may constitute a preparation for demonstration and rigorous philosophic study, an aspect which is not treated in the *Decisive Treatise*. On the other hand, certain issues may be specific to each method, something stressed also in the *Decisive Treatise*. Some topics debated by the theologians might perhaps admit of various opinions, while some issues might be more specific to demonstrative proof.

Certain issues could simply be discussed differently by both disciplines. For instance, universal questions such as those about God's nature should be handled in demonstration, whereas questions regarding human action, namely the way in which one should worship God through prayer, might be more properly treated by dialecticians.

Dialectic and demonstration share certain common features in the way they use syllogism and infer the unknown from the known. However, demonstration uses demonstrative (necessary) knowledge and demonstrative proofs, whereas dialectic uses possible and reputable topics, and the conclusions are in each case either necessary or reputable.

The *Middle Commentary on Topics* further shows why demonstration is superior to dialectic, for since dialectic does not provide us with certain knowledge it cannot be accepted in the exact terms in which it is formulated, in other words, as literally as demonstration. Dialectic produces a different form of assent to truth. Some issues may not admit of demonstration and must be dealt with in dialectic; other issues can be treated by both with different degrees of certainty.

The commentaries on *Posterior Analytics* and *Topics*, and the *Decisive Treatise*, agree in the treatment of the merits of demonstration and dialectic, valuing the former over and above the latter, although both play a necessary role within the scheme of the various forms of assent. Dialectic represents a lower form of assent than does its superior, more strictly philosophical, counterpart. The commentaries do not appear to stipulate a specific class of dialecticians, except that these are not yet philosophers, or may be philosophers in training. The *Decisive Treatise*, instead, highlights the political and religious role of both philosophy and dialectic with their respective classes, in clearly associating the theologians with the dialectical class, and seeking to fashion a public, political and religious role for the philosophers. Thus the political and religious aspects of the distinction between demonstration and dialectic come to the fore in the *Decisive Treatise*.

Averroes identifies – particularly in the *Decisive Treatise* – the less positive aspects of dialectic with the shortcomings of the theologians' methods, particularly the fact that dialectic does not yield certainty as does demonstration. On the other hand, the issues dealt with by the theologians, such as the nature of God and his attributes and actions, are unavoidable, indeed central.

While following closely in the steps of Aristotle in the commentaries on *Topics*, there is a concurrent concern on Averroes' part to address the issue of how best to convey the truths of religion to the majority of people by using philosophy. Criticism of the theologians surfaces here, as well as in the *Decisive Treatise*.³⁹

³⁹ 'Among all his writings, the *Short Commentaries on Aristotle's Topics, Rhetoric, and Poetics* are the best sources for acquiring an understanding of the relation Averroës thought existed between politics, religion, and philosophy. In the first place, his thought about this problem was based on specific ideas about the logical character of different kinds of speech, their proximity to certain knowledge, and the investigative or practical purposes to which each might be put. While these ideas are presupposed in his other works,

In these commentaries, dialectic is a tool to teach philosophers the way to convey the truths of religion to the multitude, while allowing them to train for the higher discipline of demonstration. It thus has a double function, to prepare for the study of demonstration and as a means to communicate with non-philosophers, thus serving as a bridge between the two classes.

We now turn to Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* while comparing them with his understanding of this discipline in the *Decisive Treatise*.

The Commentaries on *Rhetoric*

Before analysing Averroes' understanding of the nature and function of the discipline of rhetoric it is important to bear in mind the main points made by Aristotle in his influential work. Rhetoric plays an important role within Aristotle's corpus, and it came to be considered, as we have seen, as forming part of the *Organon*. For Aristotle, rhetoric complements dialectic. They share several common characteristics, among them the fact that they are accessible to everyone, and have no single subject matter but deal with all subjects. Rhetoric is about persuasion but also arguing for one's views and attacking an opponent's arguments. It is a political and legal tool that can be used to defeat or win over opponents in law courts, although there is a distinct usage in law and politics. An orator can defend his own political interests by using rhetoric.

Rhetoric deals with the particular rather than the general, in the light of Aristotle's claim to the effect that a jury deals with the particular while the lawgiver deals with the universal.⁴⁰ Rhetoric is concerned with the modes of

including his larger commentaries on the logical arts, they are explained in these treatises. Secondly, these treatises contain the fullest statement of the grounds for Averroës's abiding disagreement with those who considered themselves the defenders of the faith. In Averroës's view, these dialectical theologians and masters of religious tradition were responsible for confusing the common people by using extraordinarily complex arguments to speak about simple principles of faith and guilty of attacking philosophy under the pretext of saving the faith they had garbled. Awareness of the reasons for his disagreement with them is important, because it is the background against which he expressed his ideas concerning the relation between political life and religious belief, as well as between religious belief and philosophic investigation', Butterworth, *Averroës' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's 'Topics', 'Rhetoric', and 'Poetics'*, p. 21. In his introduction to the *Middle Commentary on Topics*, Butterworth highlights in particular the connection made by Averroes between dialectic and demonstration, and the dependence of dialectic on demonstration, as well as the limits placed by Averroes on the usefulness of induction – see in particular pp. 25, 31–3, 35, 37 and 42. Butterworth further highlights the link between this commentary and Averroes' commentary on Plato's *Republic*.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 2152–69, 1354b4–8, p. 2153.

persuasion and has its distinctive kind of argument, the enthymeme, which is a syllogism lacking one of the premisses – for instance, to say that Socrates is mortal because he is a man, omitting the major premiss to the effect that ‘all men are mortal’. Aristotle believes that human beings have a natural tendency to seek knowledge. Dialectic admits the use of commonly understood notions. Although opposites can be defended in these two logical methods, Aristotle argues that the truth will eventually prevail, for the truth is more persuasive. For people who cannot be educated, one should use common notions, as in dialectic.⁴¹ Rhetoric discusses persuasive facts and real and apparent means of persuasion (methods and means of persuading) – while dialectic deals with real and apparent inference. Dialectic stands between demonstration and rhetoric, using as it does complete syllogisms, but considering opposites equally, whereas demonstration argues for one of two opposites to the exclusion of the other. Rhetoric employs technical and non-technical means of persuasion in any subject, and includes three kinds of persuasion through the spoken word: the character of the speaker, the influence on the audience’s frame of mind, and the proof itself (real or apparent). Both dialectic and rhetoric deal with the truth and what is commonly known, and not the false, like sophistry, but the proofs are not as stringent as in demonstration proper. Aristotle mentions the example alongside the enthymeme as specific to rhetorical arguments.⁴² However, while the example suits political oratory, the use of enthymemes is better suited to forensic speech, which deals with past events and their verification, and is based on the law and not the contingent, whereas political oratory deals with the future. Both dialectic and rhetoric are addressed to people who cannot understand a complex argument, and are not trained in logic. And although rhetoric does not have its own subject matter, but deals with all subjects, it is particularly useful in ethics and politics. In this sense, both rhetoric and dialectic deal with the contingent (our actions) rather than necessary events, in contrast to, for instance, physics or metaphysics. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Aristotle distinguishes between particular laws, which apply to the members of a given community, and universal laws, such as the laws of nature.⁴³ Rhetoric thus deals with that which is probable, for example voluntary action, which is performed knowingly and without constraint.⁴⁴

In speech-making, which is studied in rhetoric, three elements are considered: the speaker, the audience addressed and the subject matter. Speeches divide into deliberative, forensic and epideictic. In listing them, Aristotle states that ‘deliberative speaking urges us either to do or not to do something: one of these two courses is always taken by private counsellors, as well as by men who address public assemblies. Forensic speaking either attacks or defends somebody: one or other of these two things must always be done by the parties in a case. Epideictic

⁴¹ Ibid., 1355a26–29.

⁴² Ibid., 1356b2–6.

⁴³ Ibid., 1373b4–6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1368b9–10.

oratory either praises or censures somebody'.⁴⁵ The propositions of rhetoric can be composed of evidences, probabilities or signs.⁴⁶ In a statement that we find echoed in Averroes, Aristotle argues that advice is only offered on matters on which one can deliberate. With regard to the relationship of rhetoric to other sciences, Aristotle states that it combines logic and ethics, and stands between dialectic and sophistical reasoning. In order to reach happiness, which is the general human goal and cannot be achieved without excellence or virtue, deliberation is needed, and consists of the ways and means, peace and war, national defence, food supply and legislation. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* thus builds a bridge between his ethics and his politics, elucidating the use of the spoken word to promote favourable political and ethical results. Aristotle also offers ethics maxims in this work, for instance the principle, oft repeated by Socrates in Plato's dialogues, that it is better 'to suffer wrong than to do wrong', since this would be the choice of a virtuous person.⁴⁷ But rhetoric also deals with forms of government, a section of political theory.

Aristotle's rhetoric tackles human emotions and emotional reactions in depth, given their significance in inducing persuasion. Among the topics commonly used in all oratory are those pertaining to the possible and the impossible. Among the specific forms of oratorical argument he lists the example and the enthymeme, which usually contains a maxim – a statement of a general kind concerning questions of practical conduct. Maxims come in four different types, two requiring a supplement and two not. If requiring a supplement they may be paradoxical or part of an enthymeme. Alternatively, they can be known truths or immediately understood.⁴⁸ Example is based on induction and is divided into the employment of past facts (which in turn can be found in the form of the 'illustrative parallel') and the fable.⁴⁹ The enthymeme, however, works on the basis of deduction, but differs from the kind of deduction to be found in dialectic. Its simplicity is effective, especially in addressing common people. Commonplaces can be integrated into enthymemes, and these can be used to prove or to disprove something. Aristotle accepts that fallacies and untruths may appear in rhetoric, as is shown in his reference to Protagoras' teaching how 'to make the worse argument seem the better'.⁵⁰ Enthymemes can be based upon probabilities, examples, evidences and signs. More specifically, 'Enthymemes based upon probabilities are those which argue from what is, or is supposed to be, usually true. Enthymemes based upon example are those which proceed from one or more similar cases, arrive at a general proposition, and then argue deductively to a particular inference. Enthymemes based upon evidences are those which argue from the inevitable and the invariable. Enthymemes based upon signs are those which argue from

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1358b8–14.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1359a7–8.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1364b21–23, p. 2171.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1394b7–12.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1393b4–10.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1402a24–28, p. 2235.

some universal or particular proposition, true or false'.⁵¹ Signs are not deductive. Aristotle argues that because rhetoric is concerned with appearances, it is necessary to take into account also the mode of delivery, such as the volume of sound, the modulation of pitch, and the rhythm of speech.⁵² Metaphor – which should draw on similarities between things, though not too obvious ones – is useful in rhetoric and prose language, as is simile, which is equally a metaphor; whereas ambiguous words belong in sophistical speech. Synonyms have their place in poetry, although rhythm, as we have seen, is also part of prose speech. Proverbs and hyperboles are also considered metaphors.⁵³

The correctness of language and good style are important elements in rhetorical speech. Appropriate language should express emotion and character, and the tone used should correspond to its subject. In rhetoric, one may interrogate one's interlocutor, prompting him or her to agree or to contradict himself or herself if in disagreement with one's initial thesis. In rhetoric, Aristotle stresses, it is important to arouse the emotions of the audience, such as pity, anger or hatred.

In Aristotle's work, rhetoric appears as distinct from, but related to, dialectic. It not only uses different methods but also has a different subject matter, and it is less closely related to demonstration than dialectic. In relation to demonstrative reasoning, it is clear that the methods as well as the object studied differ. While demonstration studies metaphysics and physics for the most part, politics and ethics seem to come under the dominion of rhetoric. In order to understand Averroes' conception of rhetoric we will analyse his short and middle commentaries on Aristotle's work.

The Short Commentary on Rhetoric

Averroes' *Short Commentary on Rhetoric* belongs to a set of short commentaries written on Aristotle's *Organon* at an early stage of his career as a philosopher and Aristotelian commentator. One of the most striking features of this commentary is arguably the way in which Averroes not only mentions the Islamic theologians in the context of Aristotle's exposition on rhetoric, but incorporates essential aspects of the Islamic tradition, in this case *hadith* literature.

Averroes defines rhetoric as the art whereby one seeks to effect complete persuasion on particular matters.⁵⁴ For him, persuasion is a 'kind of probable supposition'.⁵⁵ Among the things that produce persuasion are arguments (examples and proofs) on the one hand and external things on the other. The latter include

⁵¹ Ibid., 1402b14–20, p. 2236.

⁵² Ibid., 1403ba30–31.

⁵³ Ibid., 1413a17–22.

⁵⁴ Averroës' *Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's 'Topics', 'Rhetoric', and 'Poetics'*, p. 78.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 63.

oaths and testimonies. The proofs adduced in rhetoric contain the specific kind of reasoning to be found in rhetoric, the enthymeme.

With regard to the matter of rhetorical speech, Averroes states that this is the unexamined opinion of all or most people, which is trusted immediately, without a previous examination, and so consists in probable suppositions which may happen to be true or not. We are a step away from dialectic, whose matter is reputable or well-known opinions, which are truly generally accepted.⁵⁶ However, neither dialectic nor rhetoric had a specific subject matter.

This kind of argument is persuasive because one of the premisses is omitted, and it is not clear which premiss leads to the conclusion. Such unexamined opinions can be based on received opinion or (immediately) sense-perceived things. As regards the modality of the elements of these received opinions or proofs, it includes that which is necessary, or possible for the most part, or equally possible.⁵⁷ However, the distinction between these categories within rhetoric is not a hard and fast rule. Demonstration admits only of the necessary, to the exclusion of the possible (for the most part) or the equally possible. With regard to the equally possible, rhetoric accepts this kind of modality while assuming that one of the opposites is preponderant over the other.

Examples used in rhetoric may consist of likenesses in a common matter or by analogy. In an example, and in stark contrast to the rules of demonstration, judgement about a particular is not made on the basis of the universal to which it belongs; therefore the example is not conclusive. Moreover, sense perception does nothing to yield certainty with regard to universals, and so no generalisations can be based upon it. Averroes berates in particular the Islamic theologian al-Juwaynī for extolling the use of examples as valid in itself for reaching certainty.⁵⁸ Averroes then says that in the same way that dialectic uses induction and syllogism, so rhetoric correspondingly uses example and enthymeme.

Both the example and the enthymeme are considered to be persuasive tools, as are another eleven external things that are not arguments: the virtue of the speaker, using the passions to bring about assent, making moral speeches, praising or belittling the matter at hand, consensus, testimonies, arousing desire or apprehension, challenging and betting, oaths, the external qualities of the speech, such as the inflection of the voice, and finally distorting speeches, a quality that is more readily found in sophistry.

Among these persuasive elements, Averroes highlights testimony, a kind of report which occurs either from sense perception, or by intellectual apprehension, from one or more persons. Their persuasive power lies with the multitude rather than the philosophers. Averroes goes on to explain what testimony or report means within Islam, speaking of the testimony of Muhammad and the reports based on his sayings (*hadith*). In this context he mentions the significance of the number

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 68.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 72.

of reporters and the continuity of the tradition or oral reports. However, certainty obtained from oral reports is rare if there is no conclusive syllogism accompanying them.⁵⁹ Consensus also belongs in rhetoric; thus, one should not accuse others of infidelity if they depart from the consensus, since it does not afford absolute certainty.

A particular kind of persuasive challenge is effected by a miracle, but Averroes endorses here al-Ghazzali's claim to the effect that assent to matters of religion through miracles is for the multitude rather than philosophers.⁶⁰ Between persuasive external things and proofs, namely enthymemes in the case of rhetoric, Averroes favours the latter for bringing about assent.

Averroes' *Short Commentary on Rhetoric* is a short but incisive work on the role of rhetoric within the logical disciplines. Here as in other commentaries, his main concern is the question of representation, and above all assent, which for him has a strong religious connotation in addition to the generally epistemological context.

The Middle Commentary on Rhetoric

Averroes' *Middle Commentary on Rhetoric* has benefitted from a detailed and careful critical edition and study in three volumes by Maroun Aouad.⁶¹ A previous Arabic edition of this middle commentary had been produced by A. Badawi (Cairo, 1960), and another by M.S. Salem (Sālim) in 1967.⁶² Aouad's edition is the most complete, and therefore it will be my main reference. Aouad states that the *Middle Commentary on Rhetoric* was written in 1175.⁶³

According to Averroes, rhetoric shares some characteristics with dialectic, for both address all or other people, rather than oneself, unlike demonstration, which is used to address, persuade and converse with oneself. It is worth highlighting that mastering all three sciences is a matter for the logician, for all these are parts of logic. In addition, dialectic and rhetoric examine all things rather than being

⁵⁹ According to Maroun Aouad, in Averroes' estimation, oral reports only produce opinions and are even inferior to enthymemes and examples; these ground oral reports, but not the other way around. This position calls into question the epistemological value of the historical sciences in Islam, which are essential for the constitution of Islamic theological and juridical doctrines; see Maroun Aouad, 'La critique radicale du témoignage, de la loi positive et du consensus par Averroès', in *Averroès et les averroïsmes juif et latin: Actes du Colloque international, Paris, 16–18 juin 2005*, ed. J.-Brenet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 161–81, pp. 180–81.

⁶⁰ *Averroës' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's 'Topics', 'Rhetoric', and 'Poetics'*, p. 77.

⁶¹ Averroès (Ibn Rušd), *Commentaire moyen à la Rhétorique d'Aristote*, Introduction générale, édition critique du texte arabe, traduction française, commentaire et tables par Maroun Aouad; vol. I, *Introduction générale et tables*; vol. II, *Edition et traduction*; vol. III, *Commentaire du Commentaire* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), henceforth Averroès, *Commentaire moyen à la Rhétorique d'Aristote*.

⁶² Ibid., vol. I, p. 216.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 7.

limited to just one subject matter or examining its object under a specific prism, such as physics or metaphysics.⁶⁴

Rhetoric is useful in disputes and for teaching and guidance, for accusation and defence. Like the other parts of logic, it employs syllogism, as do demonstration and dialectic. However, it has its own specific syllogism, which is the enthymeme – a syllogism lacking one premiss, usually the major, that contains the universal term, an important distinction given that too complex a syllogism would not be understood by the multitude. An example of an enthymeme is, as we have seen, to say that Socrates is a man, hence he is mortal, omitting the major premiss to the effect that all men are mortal. Rhetoric studies everything that influences or brings about persuasion, including the passions, although these are not the central focus of rhetorical persuasion, since of themselves they prepare but do not bring about persuasion.⁶⁵

Rhetorical arguments can rely on external aspects, such as the passions, but argumentation is its main characteristic, given that it is a part of logic.

For Averroes as for Aristotle, rhetoric has political as well as legal uses, and again the Islamic influence in Averroes' interpretation is not far to seek.

According to Averroes, it is the laws which determine what is right and wrong, whereas judges determine what was or was not the case, in the circumstances at hand. Therefore, controversy and confrontation before the judges belong to this art. In advising, judges should refer to what is known to people – what is common knowledge – regarding what is useful and harmful. Only legal scholars know what is just or unjust, not the multitude.⁶⁶ Therefore, one who speaks before the judges must know what is just and unjust. This shows that rhetoric, while addressed to most people, is mastered by a few. In fact, Averroes states that it is the logician who masters this art. The goal is to produce persuasion and assent in one's audience or interlocutor. While both are part of this art, controversy demands a greater persuasion effort than does deliberation. Rhetorical assent, according to Averroes, is not due to that which is true but to that which resembles the true.⁶⁷ Rather, true rhetorical premisses must be praiseworthy, coming across as true. What kind of assent does rhetoric aim at producing? Its goal is to induce the practice of virtuous actions, and to do so in people who do not understand demonstration. Here the significance of using enthymeme comes to the fore. It lacks one premiss, thus offering a simplified argument which is particularly effective with people with no syllogistic training.

Like dialectic, rhetoric considers two opposites at once. It does not produce inevitable assent (that is the prerogative of demonstration) and it can be misused – seeing that it can be employed to persuade of that which is not true or beneficial. In addition, any person could potentially persuade (in the same way that a

⁶⁴ Ibid., vol. II, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Ibid., vol. II, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Ibid., vol. II, p. 6.

⁶⁷ Ibid., vol. II, p. 7.

non-physician can cure), but not always or for the most part.⁶⁸ One becomes a rhetorician through habit (or acquired practice).

A sophistical syllogism is not really a syllogism, unlike the enthymeme. Since the sophist simply aims at persuading, he sometimes shares the rhetorician's goal, but sophistry shares nothing with dialectic. In explaining Aristotle's definition of rhetoric to the effect that it is a faculty or potentiality (*quwwa*) which seeks to persuade on any aspect pertaining to individual things, Averroes claims that faculty or potentiality signifies here that it acts on two opposites and may or may not bring about the desired effect. It employs all efforts in examining thoroughly how to bring about persuasion as far as possible, and in any of the individuals falling under the Aristotelian ten categories.⁶⁹ As we have seen, it does not seek to persuade only regarding one subject, such as for instance medicine, which aims at persuading with regard to health and the means to produce or restore health in the human body. Rhetoric concerns persuasion regarding that which depends on our free will and choice.

One of the three aspects effecting persuasion is the virtue of the speaker, who should establish his own virtue, whereby his words become more persuasive, for good men are more persuasive. The second aspect relates to the passions which induce assent to that which is being discussed. Finally, it is important to use persuasive words to establish that about which one speaks. Averroes, like Aristotle, ties rhetoric to discussions about ethics and politics, and, for instance, deliberative matters. In addition, neither rhetoric nor dialectic attains to certainty. Given that all persuasive argumentation, by asserting or denying, is produced through syllogism or something resembling a syllogism, both dialectic and rhetoric use syllogism: dialectic uses induction or syllogism, and rhetoric uses induction, enthymeme and example, the latter corresponding to induction in rhetoric.⁷⁰ Both induction and example start from an existing thing or fact. In dialectic the syllogism is more trustworthy than induction, and in rhetoric example is more persuasive than the enthymeme because the latter more often involves opposition.

With regard to the object of persuasion, it can be addressed to one or more people; it can concern universals or particulars and can be effected through the thing itself or something else. Like dialectic, rhetoric does not employ what is admitted by one person only, but by the majority.⁷¹

A good syllogism in this art is composed of evident premisses, or of premisses that are evident through other premisses. Averroes states that judges seek simplicity in the proceedings of a case. In addition, the point at stake is to persuade that something is the case or exists, and that it is praiseworthy or not. For the sake of brevity, one premiss is omitted in enthymemes. Rhetorical premisses are usually possible and rarely necessary. This is an important point in rhetoric, the fact that it

⁶⁸ Ibid., vol. II, p. 11.

⁶⁹ Ibid., vol. II, p. 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid., vol. II, p. 17.

⁷¹ Ibid., vol. II, p. 19.

deals with the possible rather than with the necessary. This stands in sharp contrast to demonstrative method, which stipulates that its premisses are necessary and always the case, an indication that demonstration suits sciences such as physics and metaphysics, which deal not with particular cases but with what is always the case, and the eternal, such as God and eternal laws of nature. Rhetoric deals instead with human relations, either in principle, as in ethics, or within a human community, as in politics. In relation to the content, Averroes further states that truth in necessary things is more general than truth in particular (instances).⁷² Further making the distinction between possible and necessary in this context, he states that necessary is, for instance, an attribute that always applies to the subject of which it is predicated, whereas the possible sometimes applies to its subject and sometimes does not. The first figure, which employs universal propositions in its premisses, is the hallmark, as we have seen, of demonstrative discourse.

Example is related to induction because it derives from it, but it specifically goes from one particular to another through the universal. Pursuing his discussion of syllogistic logic within the realm of rhetoric, Averroes states that the enthymeme is found in relation to the ten categories. The subject matter of rhetoric includes kinds/species (*anwā'*) and (common)places (*mawāḍi'*, topics), as in dialectic. They furnish the subject matter to be used in enthymemes. The kinds are universal premisses which are used in each of the particular arts and the (common)places are universal premisses whose particulars are used in each of the arts. Rhetorical speech must include three elements, namely a speaker or orator, the subject being handled and an audience, which can be (1) a judge or (2) a contradictor of what is being proposed, or (3) the audience to be persuaded.

Here Averroes assimilates Aristotle's purpose to his own Islamic purposes. The Andalusian philosopher states that the judge judges according to (1) what is to be (future cases) – and what is beneficial or detrimental (2) what has already taken place, such as virtues or vices, developed by choice, or (3) the just or unjust. The judge of future cases is the ruler (*al-ra'īs*) who elects the judge (*qāḍī*) in Islamic states. He who contradicts uses rhetorical *habitus*, or practice. Therefore, we find three kinds of rhetorical utterance: deliberation, controversy and verification (*tathbūt*).

Deliberation is divided into permission and prohibition, controversy is divided into accusation and acquittal, and verification is divided into praise and blame or reproach. Deliberation concerns future time, whereas controversy concerns the past. Praise and blame concern the present time. The goals of deliberative utterances are to advise regarding the useful and the harmful, whereas controversy discusses the just and unjust and verification addresses virtue and vice. However, each kind of utterance may accidentally use the purpose or end of another kind of utterance.⁷³ Among the kinds of premisses in rhetorical speech one finds praiseworthy ones, indications (*dalā'il*) and signs (*'alāmāt*). Praiseworthy premisses include those

⁷² Ibid., vol. II, p. 22.

⁷³ Ibid., vol. II, p. 30.

which are not indications, for example, that one ought to favour one's benefactor, and the latter (indications) are things indicating that something, a certain quality, belongs to something else. The distinction between indications and signs is that the former are found in the first figure, which employs universal premisses, whereas signs are found in the third (and also second) syllogistic figure.⁷⁴ In addition, the orator should use premisses indicating what is possible or impossible. Orators are also required to show that something is good or evil, great or small.

As regards deliberation or advice, one should inquire into the good advised, and not concerning necessary physical processes, or natural processes that do not depend on us; for deliberation is not about what is necessary and already determined but rather about the possible.⁷⁵ Strictly speaking, deliberation addresses itself to the possible scenarios that depend on one's free will. In comparing philosophy (here once again associated with demonstrative reasoning) and rhetoric, Averroes states that philosophy is superior to the art of rhetoric in picturing (*taṣwīr*) and assenting (the two main aspects of the cognitive process leading to religious belief, as described in the *Decisive Treatise*), for the premisses used in philosophy are truer and more correct than the ones used in rhetoric. In the latter, and concerning our knowledge of the things under scrutiny, what matters is not the things in themselves but whether they are reputable. Averroes makes a further specification, to the effect that rhetoric is composed of logic and the science of political ethics (*al-siyāsa al-khalqīyya*), and includes aspects of dialectic and sophistical discourse, or aspects resembling these two arts.

Our main concern here is the method – in other words, the place – of rhetoric as a part of logic, more than the ethical or political ramifications, which take centre stage after the introductory part of the middle commentary on *Rhetoric*. Averroes, however, makes the proviso that ethics only becomes integral to this art when the issues at hand are suited to discussion and addressing other people. Politics is tied to ethics for the sake of obtaining scientific knowledge of these things. Dialectic and sophistry only become part of rhetoric when the subject matter is accessible to all people. The difference between rhetoric and these other arts consists in the extent of the examination (*miqdār al-naẓar*) – that is to say, rhetoric does not study politics or ethics exhaustively and therefore is no substitute for these sciences.

The topics on which the orator advises all people of a city, a few or just one, are five: the accumulation of wealth/reserves, advice on peace or war, advice on protection of the city from foreign attacks, imports and obedience to the laws.⁷⁶ Averroes goes on to describe these items in detail, including the significance of good laws. He states that legislation pertains to the domain of politics, not rhetoric. The orator should not allow the corruption of a good state or of any condition which is based on the practice of virtues. This aspect of rhetoric also includes the things which should be prohibited or disallowed. Rhetoric concerns persuasion

⁷⁴ Ibid., vol. II, p. 23.

⁷⁵ Ibid., vol. II, p. 31.

⁷⁶ Ibid., vol. II, pp. 33–4.

regarding the good, but seeking to show that a good is not a good belongs in the domain of sophistry.

As part of rhetoric, Averroes examines the nature of the good as well as questions pertaining to the law. In this context, he states that Islamic law does not change and is thus eternal.⁷⁷ After discussing matters pertaining to praise and blame, Averroes proceeds to the issue of accusation and defence, which involve an agent, an object and the act of accusing or defending.

With respect to the laws, he distinguishes between general and special laws. The former are unwritten and what one might call natural law, such as the love that binds children and parents. Written law varies according to nation and is written and mastered by a few individuals, such as statesmen and judges, whereas general laws are inscribed in everyone's hearts. He goes on to examine the causes of injustice, which is considered to happen by chance when the agent has no knowledge of the act. Injustice can also occur by constraint, by choice or through a passion such as anger.

Averroes stresses the importance of forgiveness, which is, however, not to be considered when an offence takes place against God. He considers it a great injustice to punish people for their virtues, citing the example of Jesus' Apostles, or the gravity of a crime that is committed for the first time, such as Cain's murder of Abel.

Non-technical assent in rhetoric comes in five forms: laws, witnesses, contracts, torture and oaths. With regard to torture he concurs with Aristotle in condemning it, and he highlights its uselessness for obtaining truthful information, arguing that one can never put one's trust in it. Therefore, he claims, Islamic law disregards any statements made under duress and any penalties associated with information obtained in such a way. In discussing these matters, Averroes often compares Greek law or custom with Islamic law, and reads Aristotle's conclusions into his own medieval Islamic milieu.

Averroes sums up the first book of rhetoric, which dealt with the various kinds of utterance regarding permission and prohibition, praise and blame, accusation and defence, and assent regarding these. He further argues that the judge may incline towards one or the other of these propositions, given that they are not certain. It is therefore important to study the role of emotions in bringing about assent in the judge, which is the subject of the second book. This is because the judgement proffered by the judge is influenced by the emotions he feels. Averroes adds that someone persuades for the most part if he is knowledgeable, virtuous and known to his audience, sharing similar characteristics such as language and birthplace.⁷⁸

Proceeding to the description of the various emotions, Averroes studies, in particular, anger (and its relation with vengeance), contempt, friendship and its different kinds (and the kind of person one likes to befriend) and hatred. It is important to establish if one is a friend or an enemy in order to find the motive

⁷⁷ Ibid., vol. II, p. 70.

⁷⁸ Ibid., vol. II, p. 139.

(or lack of it) for injustice if that is what is being investigated.⁷⁹ He describes fear, and its opposite, courage, shyness/timidity and shame, flattery, and the opposite of shame, namely impudence. Preoccupation is also discussed by Averroes, also in relation to indignation and envy. The significance of studying these passions consists in the ability, for instance, to arouse indignation in the judge towards one's opponent, and in general to sway the judge in one's favour. With regard to envy, Averroes claims that we envy those who are similar to us, in terms of age, wealth, and such attributes.⁸⁰ In knowing the passions, one can build affective/emotive syllogisms (*al-maqāyīs al-infi'āliyya*). In doing this one must take into account, according to Aristotle and Averroes, five states (*aḥwāl*) with their corresponding dispositions: (1) the passions/emotions (such as anger or pity), (2) aspirations (one's preferences), (3) age (youth, maturity and old age), (4) one's good fortunes (for instance noble birth or health) and finally (5) the soul (with its different mental dispositions and habits). He proceeds to analyse the characteristics of the different age groups.

Having spoken about the syllogisms and the emotions that can sway those involved in this kind of art, he goes on to distinguish three roles in this process, the speaker, the opponent/interlocutor and the judge, who has the final word. In order to maximise the potential for persuasion, one should have a judge and an addressee in all kinds of rhetorical speech, such as deliberative speech. Averroes affirms that the judge is superior to the speaker and the interlocutor and adds that in Islam the judge has the final word. Only the judge's utterances, such as oaths and testimony, should be used to the exclusion of those of the speaker and the interlocutor.⁸¹

The common issues raised in the three kinds of rhetorical speech are (1) if something is possible or impossible, (2) if something will happen or not, (3) if something happened in the past or not, and finally (4) how to aggrandise or lessen something. When disputing, seeking to aggrandise or lessen is particularly appropriate. Mentioning the past particularly suits litigious cases, and for deliberation one should invoke what is possible – that is, what is possible to human agency, not in nature, which is not controlled by human action.

Averroes then reverts to an earlier point regarding the two technical components of rhetorical speech, namely the enthymeme, with a premiss and a conclusion, and the example. Further explaining the example as it is used in rhetoric, he states that it is based on past occurrences, or based on an invented example, which can be

⁷⁹ Ibid., vol. II, p. 165. With regard to the differences between Averroes and Aristotle in expounding the discipline of rhetoric, Aouad argues that Averroes is more insistent on the connection of the accidental with rhetoric, as well as the lack of certainty in rhetorical premisses and the role of the imagination in arousing emotions; see Averroès, *Commentaire moyen à la Rhétorique d'Aristote*, vol. I, pp. 104, 108, 114.

⁸⁰ Ibid., vol. II, p. 199.

⁸¹ Ibid., vol. II, p. 216.

fictitious – citing the stories in *Kalila wa Dimna*.⁸² Another characteristic of the example is the use of repeated or common expressions such as idioms. Examples look at similarities between the story and the case under discussion. They are more convincing if they are based on the past, but an invented story can present a closer similarity.

The next component of rhetoric analysed by Averroes is the maxim (*ra'y*), which speaks of universal matters regarding what to choose or avoid. It is related to the enthymeme in the sense that it constitutes a conclusion or a principle of an enthymeme. The maxim does not have premisses or more than one sentence. If premisses are added to a maxim we obtain an enthymeme. Alternatively, a proposition that is used as a principle of an enthymeme whose second premiss and conclusion are omitted is a maxim. There are four kinds of maxim, which are divided into two groups. A maxim can be part of a premiss or a conclusion of a demonstration, in which case it may be clear to everyone or to just a few. In addition, it can be a hidden maxim, which requires a completing syllogism, and this can be completed with a conclusion or with a premiss. Ultimately, the meaning of a maxim should be intelligible to everyone.

When an ethical utterance is put in the form of a maxim, one should use that which promotes the virtues and arouses a latent predisposition of the audience to act in a virtuous way. Averroes sees maxims as a language understood by most people who cannot abstract universals from particulars, and who can only understand universals if they are related to particulars. These people thus benefit from knowledge of universals, in the way that the universal contained in the maxim suits them. In addition, indicating a universal which overlaps with what one desires or shuns is a way of inducing acceptance of a universal ethical principle. It produces persuasion regarding that which one did not wish and did not accept as a mere particular. A maxim produces the impression of knowledge in people who would not otherwise have it, whereby people feel that they have the reasoning and syllogism which serves as basis for the maxim, leading to the acceptance of the utterance. In proposing a universal in this way, the hearer is more likely to accept it. In addition, the maxim renders the utterance ethical. The maxim proposes and induces the adoption of a universal principle expressed. A person who adopts it in this way has the disposition of one who adopts it – thus having the understanding and the will to do it.⁸³

After treating the nature of maxims, Averroes returns to the general characteristics of rhetorical speech, stating that the premisses of enthymemes are not as well known as those of dialectical syllogisms – for they are neither unknown nor too well known. Moreover, the hearer accepts them upon hearing them, which means that they were potentially in the hearers before they become actual once the hearers understand those premisses.

⁸² Ibid., vol. II, pp. 225–6.

⁸³ Ibid., vol. II, p. 235.

As for the issue surrounding the ones who master this art, Averroes emphasises that untrained people should not address the masses, given their lack of experience – in any case, the masters of rhetorical speech are logicians in one way or another. Inexperienced people could confuse unknown premisses with known ones. They may believe that well-known premisses are unknown or that what is clear to them is clear to all – whereas what they say may need clarification. There is an assumption that they may not be able to express themselves with clarity although they understand what is proposed to them. An address to the masses must be well crafted and clear.

The premisses of rhetorical speech must be evident, and produce immediate assent, and they should come from judges or from persons acknowledged to be virtuous, not from just anyone among the people. The premisses should be taken from that which is necessary and possible, and from what is the case for the most part, for a syllogism composed of that which is clear is superior. The speaker must know that of which he speaks, whether in deliberation, controversy or boasting. In other words, the premisses should state that which belongs to the thing discussed, and must come from those who are well known in the community. Averroes claims that the truer the premisses are, the more they belong to the matter at hand and the more persuasive they are – for Aristotle this is complete wisdom.

Averroes then moves to topics, which are elements that go into the composition of enthymemes and its premisses. There are two kinds of enthymemes, those used to establish and those used to remonstrate. The topics are used in function of these two kinds of enthymeme. For deliberation, one considers the harmful and the useful; for boasting, one considers praise and blame; and for controversy, one considers that which is just and unjust, regarding the passions and in ethical questions. Averroes describes the places that allow the speaker to establish something.

Other *topoi* come from definitions, from induction or from opposition (*taqābul*) and division of the predicate. One could reduce opposites to the same starting point, such as to say that in considering whether philosophy is good or bad one must philosophise – with the underlying assumption that it is necessary in any case to philosophise.⁸⁴

Premises used in this context must conform to general opinion and be admitted either immediately or easily over time. Averroes states that persuasion in this case is of two kinds: either the premisses are admitted immediately, or they are admitted because they are praised and known by all. Premises in the art of rhetoric based on opinion are twofold: they are admitted because they are well known, or they are admitted/assented to because they are related to well-known things. There are three kinds of assent, then: certain, truly well known or immediately well known.

Averroes goes on to analyse the *topoi* of reproach (*tawbīkh*), which often involve the reputation of one's opponent on the basis of his acts. Therefore, in this case, one uses data that are external to the premisses – not so much what is said but the reputation of the one who says it. This kind of topic highlights the

⁸⁴ Ibid., vol. II, p. 246.

contrary together with the thing mentioned. This topic uses fewer words that are immediately clear, and reproach should be more self-evident than assertion.

The distinction between true and corrupted enthymemes is made, and Averroes stresses that a syllogism valid in one art may not be valid in another; for example a syllogism valid in dialectic may not be so in demonstration. Standards of certainty are higher for demonstration than for dialectic, and higher for dialectic than for rhetoric.

Topics may be misleading on account of the use of words or their meanings, for instance due to equivocal words. These misleading topics are common to all three arts – demonstration, dialectic and rhetoric – arguably in the sense of producing false or misleading conclusions. In rhetoric, for instance, one can render the question confusing with the attending result that one believes in something before it is proved. There are several ways of producing this kind of confusion, such as, for instance, to indicate as cause something that is not a cause. To this end, something is taken in a different state from the one in which it is. To induce the interlocutor into error, in dialectic, one can mention possible false things; in demonstration one brings up nonexistent things, which are false and impossible. In rhetoric one mentions obligatory things, and presents something particular as universal, by arguing that what is true particularly is true universally. In order to show that such utterances are false, one must qualify them.⁸⁵

Another *topos* consists in the objections that the audience may raise, and which may consist in opposition to the premisses or conclusions. Averroes underlines the fact that the premisses here consist of opinions. One may have a contrary opinion regarding the point at hand. One can produce an enthymeme in support of a point or of its opposite. This can be also done with well-known premisses in dialectic, but not in demonstration.

One can oppose the premisses in four ways: by denying that the premiss leads to the conclusion, by opposing the utterance itself, by opposing the questioner or by prolonging the time of the dispute. Also, one can oppose the premisses according to four *topoi*, based on the thing itself, universal or particular, or on something external, contrary or similar.

The enthymemes that magnify or lessen are not part of those which annul or establish.

At the start of the third book of the commentary on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Averroes recapitulates the three goals of rhetoric, namely, (1) it includes everything which produces persuasion, whether with respect to the meanings or the things themselves; (2) it purports to explain words expressing these meanings; and (3) it analyses the parts of rhetorical utterance. The previous books dealt with the meanings which produce persuasion, comprising three kinds. The first kind is the affective or ethical meaning, which prepares the ground. The second kind consists in establishing the virtue of the speaker. Finally, rhetorical meaning concerns the utterances used first to persuade in so far as one seeks to persuade.⁸⁶ Averroes

⁸⁵ Ibid., vol. II, p. 256.

⁸⁶ Ibid., vol. II, p. 263.

remarks that some topics are universal for the three kinds of rhetoric, while others are specific to deliberation, controversy or praise.

The third book tackles the second and third sets of issues pertaining to the study of rhetoric, namely the use of right words – which is a study of eloquence and the most appropriate to convey the desired meaning, as well as of words that are appealing to the understanding and words that signify something elevated or base – and the parts of discourse. Explaining words pertains to logic, and some aspects of eloquence are specific to each nation or language. According to Averroes one should study the words that produce assent.

In rhetoric one may avail oneself also of external means of inducing persuasion. This includes the use of gestures, sounds and intonation used in rhetorical speech and with the spoken, not the written word. He provides an example from *hadith* literature and the life of Muhammad. Much of what is said here by Aristotle, Averroes acknowledges, has no use for Arabs. In contrasting rhetoric to poetry, he states that rhetoric seeks the victory of one opinion, while poetry tries to arouse the imagination. In addition, a made-up story belongs in poetry rather than rhetoric.⁸⁷

Words used in rhetoric should be univocal, or if the words are equivocal, the meanings should be clearly distinguished. Rhetoric and poetry require the use of more persuasive words than does dialectic. Averroes proceeds to analyse the various kinds of words, totalling eight kinds. We find altered words (by substitution, exemplification or comparison), where the change can be simple or composite, common words, strange words, and imported words. There are also confusing words and made-up words. Explaining the usage of these various kinds of words, he states that current words are the best for demonstration. On the other hand, in rhetoric one should not use many imported, composite or strange words, in order to convince most people rather than only the elite.

In altered words, the change should point to relation or another category, and if a substitute is used it should be similar or related to the thing in question. If the substitute is something related, it can precede (as a universal or cause) that which it substitutes, it may come after it (such as its effects and particular) or be its concomitant. The latter must coincide in matter of time or place or be a species within the same genus. The concomitant may include a thing's contraries.⁸⁸ In order to render something evident, one should use what is similar and evident or contrary to it. Changes should be based on analogy, which serves to extol or to revile.

Averroes states that there are four 'cold nouns' (*al-asmā' al-bārida*) that should be avoided, namely those with an unclear meaning, imported words, posited (*mawḍū'*) names, and changes that are not becoming. Evoking distant accidents of something belongs in poetry.

⁸⁷ Idem, vol. II, p. 283.

⁸⁸ Ibid., vol. II, p. 279.

The example, too, is a kind of alteration. A difference between the example and alteration consists in the fact that the example must show a real similarity, whereas alteration is used with regard to various things.

Averroes highlights the need to make good use of conjunction particles, as already stressed by Alfarabi.⁸⁹ Moreover, one should use familiar terms, rather than too general ones. Ambiguous terms belong in sophistry. The singular, dual and plural should be correctly applied. Written language should be clear, and oral language should be easily explainable. Speech should evoke and promote ethical behaviour in the audience, but it can only persuade if it sounds true to the mind.

A distinction is discernible between ethical and affective utterances, but the latter can derive from the former. The orator should deliberate about the methods of persuasion. He can use something novel to set the mind thinking. In order to move the audience to do or avoid something, he should evoke the passion and disposition that will lead one to do or avoid something according to the desired outcome.

Raising the voice should not stand in the way of communicating the message. Averroes provides various examples of correct language drawn from the Qur'an. One should express oneself clearly in order to be understood and attain persuasion. Equally, the enthymeme should not be too obvious, but only understood after the hearer pays attention.⁹⁰

Alteration should not be based on equivocal words, and should present the thing as if it were before us, so one should use an appropriate alteration, for instance, the opposite of something, as well as describing the actions that are to be or are expected to be. The best kind of alteration is based on analogy and correspondence. Alteration also includes portraying the animate as inanimate and vice versa, which, Averroes states, is common in Arabic. As for alteration in describing acts, one must be sure to use terms that are neither too well known nor unknown. Leading into error can be achieved by using equivocal words or evoking the unpleasant to denote the pleasant. To sum up, alteration is effected through an opposite, an analogue, a similar term or an example.⁹¹

Resorting to hyperbole is more appropriate for oral speech. Written sentences should be more accurate and verifiable because they are permanent.

In general, Averroes recommends greater clarity when addressing a crowd than an individual or an elite, although inferior persuasion techniques, which would not be suitable for an elite, are suitable for the multitude.⁹² In spite of the significance of these rhetorical devices in public speech, Averroes claims that without such external devices as metaphors and alteration of words before an assembly, one's style is more correct and the truth of the matter easier to discern.

⁸⁹ Ibid., vol. II, p. 288.

⁹⁰ Ibid., vol. II, p. 309.

⁹¹ Ibid., vol. II, p. 317.

⁹² Ibid., vol. II, p. 321.

In Chapter 13 of Book III of his *Middle Commentary on Rhetoric*, Averroes details the essential parts of speech, the end or purpose, and assent, which confirms or denies. Narration is a part of speech and is especially suited to litigious cases. In addition we find narration, the exordium and the epilogue as components of speech. Repetition is more commonly found in deliberative speech, the exordium is not always needed in litigious speech, and in the epilogue we find assent and verification. He sums up by saying that there are five parts of rhetorical speech, namely the exordium, the goal, the narration, verification or assent and finally the epilogue.

The exordium, which serves to introduce the subject matter, comes from praise and reproach in the context of verification or assent, in deliberation it is used for exhortation and non-exhortation and in litigious discourse it comes from the accusation. The narrative should not be too long, and in it the narrator should make sure to establish his own virtuousness. Ethical utterances are only used in voluntary, practical matters, not for examining theoretical issues.⁹³ Affective utterances play an important role.

In deliberative speech, one should avoid narrative because it concerns the past, whereas deliberation is about the future, and can only be used in passing from praise to deliberation. The goal is to establish whether a thing exists or not, and if it does, whether it is harmful or not. Thirdly, one should establish whether something is just or not, and finally, if harmful and unjust, that it comes from the adversary. Deliberation regards whether something will or will not take place, and if it does, whether it is or is not just or profitable. For deliberation, the use of examples is good, whereas litigious speech prefers enthymemes, if they are not too technical. In ethical utterances, it is better to use maxims rather than enthymemes and verification, but sometimes ethical utterances should be changed into enthymemes.

Averroes gives suggestions for *topoi* that will win an argument, including making the respondent contradict himself, and he also gives advice for the respondent.

Averroes concludes this middle commentary by listing the four parts of good rhetorical speech: the speaker should establish his good reputation, he should aggrandise and lessen things as required, he should use affective and ethical utterances and finally he should speak to the point – these being four points common to all the aspects of rhetorical speech. The example and its contrary should be clearer than the thing exemplified or its contrary. Finally, the epilogue should be clearly distinct from the main narrative.

To recapitulate, the commentaries on *Topics* and *Rhetoric* show that the question of assent, in particular religious assent, is of paramount significance for Averroes. Dialectic concerns the informal discussion of truths that are ultimately religious. And, while in Aristotle rhetoric has a political and legal purpose, for Averroes, and in the context of an Islamic society, assent is always of a religious nature, for rhetoric is used either in Islamic law or within a political context that

⁹³ Ibid., vol. II, p. 338.

is shaped and underpinned by religious views, specifically Islam. It is one of the duties of Muslim statesmen to transmit religious truth to the multitude.

The significance of rhetoric lies in its ability to transmit philosophical and religious truths to the majority of people. While the philosophers discover truth through demonstration, they communicate their findings through dialectic and rhetoric, hence the significance of dialectic and rhetoric alongside demonstration. Those who assent through rhetoric do not actually master this art, they only understand its results.

Aristotle's works on dialectic and rhetoric come to life again within a medieval Islamic context in Averroes' commentaries. While the spirit and most theories to be found in Aristotle regarding dialectic and rhetoric are preserved, they acquire a different purpose and meaning when adapted by the medieval Andalusian philosopher. Having examined the differences between philosophical and religious discourse in Averroes, we now turn to Hegel for this important aspect of his philosophy of religion.

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Chapter 4

Hegel's Attitude to Religion in the Early Writings

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is arguably Hegel's most complete and focused discussion of the relation between representation and conceptual thought. However, given that religion was a constant concern in his writings and teaching, it is important to ascertain his position on these matters in his early writings, that is, his writings before the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which was published in 1807. Some scholars argue that Hegel's personal philosophy was not yet fully developed before 1800, but the early writings on religion are an important part of his philosophical output, and they cannot be ignored if one is seeking to understand the way in which he views the relation between philosophy and religion in later works. Even if Hegel's philosophical system was not fully developed before the *Phenomenology* – and although his attempts at building a philosophical system were already patent in the early 1800s – some terms that are pivotal in the early writings on Christianity, and religion in general, resurface again in his Berlin writings. One such concept, for instance, is the concept of positivity, which in connection with religion means a content imposed externally on the subject, on the basis of authority, in particular a religious text – that is, scripture.

These writings – particularly those dating from the period he spent in Bern and Frankfurt – warrant close scrutiny here also because they contain an early interpretation of Christianity which Hegel would later revise in his lectures on philosophy of religion delivered at Berlin throughout the 1820s. The question of whether Hegel's thought evolved over the several decades, from the 1790s to the 1820s, in which he reflected and wrote on religion, will be addressed later.

From the period Hegel spent in Bern, between 1793 and 1796, we have fragments on folk religion and Christianity, as well as a *Life of Jesus*, evidencing a stress on the promotion of morality and a strong influence of Kant, with its emphasis on the inner laws of reason and obedience to the moral law. *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* dates from the Frankfurt period, between 1797 and 1800. Already in these early works we find positions that are echoed later, such as the inability of the majority of people to relate in a rational or intellectual way to religion. Other views are transformed, if not discarded, in the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*.

Scholars have associated the different periods and phases of Hegel's early philosophical development with the places in which he lived as a young man. Thus the period spent in Tübingen (1788–93), where he undertook philosophical and

theological studies, is associated with the concept of folk or popular religion.¹ In Bern, Hegel came under the influence of Kant, as evidenced by his interpretation of the life of Jesus and the identification of Jesus' message with a fundamental moral teaching, the purpose of religion being the teaching and instilling of moral behaviour.² Finally, in the period spent in Frankfurt, Hegel comes closest to the Romantic movement, and he stresses the inner, subjective aspect of religion as a matter of the heart and feeling. This position is particularly evident in the writings on religion and love, and especially in *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* (1798–1800). It is curious to note regarding this early period – especially in the Frankfurt period where Hegel credits the heart, rather than cold reason, with effecting unity and reconciliation between man and God – that he places religion above philosophy, as truly reflecting reality and life.³

These early works contain a response to the various debates on religion that characterised the eighteenth century. On the one hand, in this period a systematisation of dogmatic theology was underway, championed by the likes of Christian Wolff (1679–1754) and Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762), which reflected upon the nature of God and his attributes, the proofs of God's existence and the immortality of the soul. Another trend at work in the eighteenth century, with the flourishing of the Enlightenment and its focus on the ability of human reason to fathom the secrets of the universe, is the belief in the authority of reason to the detriment of any supernatural or inaccessible authority. In this sense, the concept of natural religion evolves, based on the principle of the human capability of discovering the basic principles of religion and morals by itself without appealing to scripture. In addition, these natural principles of religion were believed to exist innately in every human being, so they transcended questions of creed or any particular faith or religion.

¹ For details of the curriculum of Hegel's studies in Tübingen, see Carmelo Lacorte, *Il primo Hegel* (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1959), pp. 122–7.

² See, for instance, Raymond Keith Williamson, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 22.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–2. It was during the Jena period that Hegel came to choose philosophy of religion, precisely because of the latter's association with representation, a limited kind of apprehension, *ibid.*, p. 84. Carmo Ferreira also stresses the fact that philosophy was not yet a central concern for Hegel in the Frankfurt period, but was subordinated to religion. Only later, in Jena, does Hegel show a preference for philosophy over religion; see Manuel J. Carmo Ferreira, *Hegel e a Justificação da Filosofia (Jena 1801–1807)* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1992), p. 19. Another contrast between the younger and the mature Hegel lies in the attitude towards education. While the young Hegel was concerned for popular education, in which religion would take a leading role, the later Hegel, in Berlin, believes that philosophy is only for a minority of people, *ibid.*, p. 192. In Frankfurt, his dialectic logic is not yet developed, and religion assumes the role of reconciling differences, uniting the finite (human) and the infinite (God); see Masakatsu Fujita, *Philosophie und Religion beim jungen Hegel* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1985), pp. 118, 150–51.

With the rise of Romanticism in the wake of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, however, some of the positions that characterised the Enlightenment were laid aside and even criticised, with a much greater attention to the human subject and the primacy of feeling and sentiment over reason.⁴ Hegel's early writings take stock of the philosophical developments of the eighteenth century, and he comes to embrace for a while a certain Romantic position in his early writings. This entire early period is critical of established religion, a criticism which does not spare even Lutheran Christianity.

Religion and Morality

The first period of Hegel's early writings displays the influence of the Enlightenment and the moral purpose of religion, as defended by Kant. Thus in an early work already mentioned, *The Life of Jesus*, a free translation and commentary on the Gospels, Hegel puts into Jesus' mouth several speeches that reflect Kant's practical philosophy and a religion which is conceived within the bounds of reason, urging men to become ethically and morally better and dutiful. Thus we find Jesus stating that one should not accept any teachings on the basis of authority, but only on the basis of the judgement of universal reason.⁵ Moreover, the parables should be interpreted in the light of the ethical laws. Hegel interprets these Gospel parables in accordance with pure ethical principles, claiming that their purpose is to show virtue to men. The kingdom of God he views as the kingdom of the good, reason and law.⁶ A certain religious relativism is at work in his claim that one can find grace from the judge of the world whether one worships Zeus or Brahma.⁷ And he appears to replace the Holy Spirit with the spirit of virtue.⁸

⁴ Hegel's ambivalence towards the Enlightenment is noted by H.S. Harris: 'This "bringing of Heaven to earth" in the sense of corrupting all sacred values into profane ones, exchanging all divine promises for a mess of worldly pottage, is the direct outcome of "the Enlightenment." "The Enlightenment" was essentially a determination to make the knowledge of this world, and the life of this world sufficient for man. It was a conscious renunciation of any attempt to share in God's life or God's knowledge. This renunciation is the "death" of speculative philosophy, and since the Enlightenment made this renunciation, it could have no proper philosophy at all. It could produce only "imperfect" philosophies, for which a sociological explanation can be given, but not a rational justification', in G.W.F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), Introduction, p. 8.

⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Das Leben Jesu. Harmonie der Evangelien nach eigener Übersetzung*, ed. Paul Roques (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1906), p. 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Still during the Bern period, some of his writings spurn a concept of religion strictly based on dogma and doctrine, religious institutions, customs and ceremonials while avoiding also a purely intellectual or rational approach, which he believes lacks life and sentiment. Instead, Hegel proposes a religion of the heart that touches people deeply and helps them become better human beings by guiding their actions.

For the young Hegel religion is a matter of the heart, and not so much the science of God, his attributes and the immortality of the soul. In addition, religion should have a positive and decisive impact on people's active behaviour.

He distinguishes, moreover, between objective and subjective religion, showing a clear preference for the latter.⁹ Objective religion he associates with a codified, written form of religion, and with abstraction, a term which even in the young Hegel bears negative connotations. Something is said to be abstract which is separated or divorced from living reality – it is opposed to the organic or, more specifically, the concrete. Objective religion is also associated with Christian doctrine and dogmatic theology as developed by the Fathers of the Church. In addition, it evokes the notions of tradition and customs. Objective religion goes hand in hand with political power and the state, and relies on three elements: concepts, customs and ceremonies.¹⁰ In contrast to objective religion we find subjective religion, which belongs to the domain of feeling and influences actions. It touches the heart instead of relying on the understanding, a faculty that divides instead of finding common points or viewing an issue in its totality – this conception of the faculty of the understanding would remain one of the hallmarks of Hegel's philosophy. This religion comes close to a natural religion in the sense that its principles could underlie every single religion. Subjective religion could be identified with folk religion, where doctrine is simpler and human happiness is an integral part of the faith.

Hegel holds that various Christian doctrines formulated throughout the history of the Church are not borne out by the life and sayings of Jesus; and some fundamental doctrines, such as that of original sin, come under his criticism. The

⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Friihe Schriften*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), p. 14.

¹⁰ Because of his criticism of established religion, the young Hegel is considered to have much in common with a later movement, known as the Young Hegelians, who drew inspiration from Hegel's writings but departed from the mature Hegel on important, especially political and religious, matters. See Lawrence S. Stepelevich, ed., *The Young Hegelians. An Anthology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Introduction, p. 3. Curiously, the Young Hegelians developed from a theological reflection on, and criticism of, the theological views (which they considered dogmatism) of the mature Hegel. Ludwig Feuerbach, a member of this group, went as far as to state that 'Whoever fails to give up the Hegelian philosophy, fails to give up theology', L. Feuerbach, 'Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy', in *The Young Hegelians*, p. 167. Another young Hegelian, Bruno Bauer, considered Hegel's philosophy as an exaltation of the human (not divine) spirit, see *The Young Hegelians*, p. 176.

later Hegel, during his Berlin period, would go back to the doctrine of original sin and interpret it in a philosophical way, but he would show no such blatant criticism of Church doctrines or of the person of Jesus himself.

The young Hegel offers an idiosyncratic reading of early church history, stating that Jesus' religion was one of love, and that his set of followers was only turned into a sect by the twelve Apostles, bent on an institutionalised Church – in a misunderstanding of Jesus' vision. On the other hand, comparing Jesus to Socrates, he remarks that the latter had not twelve but innumerable followers and had a more universal message to convey.

There remains some ambivalence towards the figure of Jesus in the young Hegel's comparisons with Socrates. A tacit comparison between philosophy and religion is observable here, Socrates representing philosophy and Jesus religion, with the underlying message that philosophy is more universal than religion. Hegel moreover remarks on most people's inability to understand the purely rational. This comparison can also be construed to mean that, in general terms, philosophy might be more universal, but in practical terms religion touches most people more directly than does philosophy. The majority of people become attached to the more sensible, physical aspects of religion in preserving their faith. Later, in the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel would reject such comparison between Socrates and Jesus as inadequate, for Jesus, sent by God and in his capacity as a teacher, was more excellent because he was without sin.¹¹ Moreover, Jesus was not just human but the Son of God and God himself. If Jesus were merely viewed as human, Hegel states, we would be employing a Qur'anic interpretation.¹² This point is repeated in the lectures on the philosophy of religion of 1827, to the effect that if Christ is regarded as merely human, then he is seen as in Islam, as a messenger of God – which according to Hegel is tantamount to rejecting the religious standpoint. Not much later, however, he claims that both Socrates and Christ died for the truth.¹³

It is significant that Hegel does not, as a Lutheran, simply criticise aspects which could be taken as distinctive features of the Catholic Church, such as an institutionalised and centralised Church, a strict insistence upon dogma, miracles, rituals and ceremonies, or the sacraments, such as confession. Luther also comes

¹¹ See also the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where Hegel no longer sees Jesus as a mere teacher, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 393.

¹² G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, *Die vollendete Religion*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1984), p. 173; English version in G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, *The Consummate Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R.F. Brown, P.C. Hodgson and J.M. Stewart with the assistance of H. S. Harris (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), p. 244, n. 215.

¹³ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, pp. 240, 244–5 (pp. 316, 320–21, n. 196 of the English edition).

under attack, for being far removed from 'the idea of the worship of God in spirit and truth' and for the focus on the doctrine of original sin.¹⁴ Hegel is also critical of the Crusades and of Christianity's acceptance of slavery.

In other fragments of the Bern period, the theory of original sin again comes under attack, as Hegel claims to find no support for it in the Bible, considering it as a doctrine that was read into the Bible but was not based on it.¹⁵ A fundamental problem with original sin appears to be the way in which it is not conducive to an improvement of human behaviour, since humanity is condemned to sin from the first.

Hegel argues that in a certain sense pagans can behave better than believers.¹⁶ However, in another work, he argues that Christians feel morally superior to pagans because the latter have no notion of the forgiveness of sins.¹⁷ The general thrust of his argument endorses a focus on morals and morality to the detriment of doctrine and dogma. Here a clear influence by various Enlightenment approaches to religion is to be discerned. For instance, there is a negative attitude towards institutionalised religion, and the view that all religions are good if they promote morality and harmonious coexistence among human beings. Thus Hegel mentions Muhammad and Christ as well as ancient Greek religion as all promoting morality and a moral lifestyle.¹⁸ Hegel shares with his contemporaries, in a trend that was at work throughout the eighteenth century, an admiration for ancient Greece, particularly its religion and political institutions. Ancient Greek religion formed a whole with Greek culture and political principles.

Following a similar principle, Rousseau praises Islam in his *On the Social Contract* (while criticising Christianity for having failed to achieve this harmony) for its principle of the unity between religion and state, and for putting religion, as he saw it, at the service of the state, a principle which he associates with his theory of a civil religion.¹⁹

The goal of objective religion, according to Hegel, is to highlight the significant aspects of subjective religion, that is, to further morality. It is not always clear whether this morality has a supernatural dimension or serves only to promote harmonious coexistence among human beings.

The highest goal of human existence, according to Hegel, is morality. While religious doctrines were defined over the centuries, there seems to be an innate capacity for virtue and morals in human beings. They can find them by thinking for themselves, unlike the belief in Christian doctrines, which is not inborn and is obtained only through grace.

¹⁴ Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, p. 63.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book IV, Chapter VIII, in *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. and ed. Donald A. Cress, intro. Peter Gay (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p. 222.

The early writings draw several comparisons between Greek and Christian religion, pointing out, for instance, that Christ emphasised the significance of virtue – as Plato had focused on the virtues. In addition, Hegel views some Christian doctrines as merely legalistic rather than moral, whereas a moral conversion is in his view the most important aspect of religion.²⁰ Some dogmas even come under question, such as the resurrection of the body, while Hegel prefers to highlight the immortality and the spiritual nature of the soul, and to announce this important view, presumably for the sake of morality.

Given these attacks on institutionalised religion, the Young Hegelians appear to have much in common with the young Hegel (and not as much with the older Hegel who lectured in Berlin), as remarked by Stepelevich.²¹

Catholicism is particularly criticised, namely the imposition of dogmas in the Papal States and throughout the Catholic world, as well as the misuse of indulgences.²² Hegel goes so far as to state that instead of consoling themselves with their belief in God and his providence, the multitude should believe in themselves, in order to acquire the virtues.²³ Hegel stresses the crucial example of Jesus as a practical model to be followed. On the whole, he believes that the most important aspects of religion are beauty (as in ancient Greek religion) and love, stressed in the Gospels. These elements alone would lead to morality, while faith, with its ties to doctrine and theology, has a secondary role.²⁴ An Enlightenment influence is not far to seek.

On the one hand, we find in these early writings an emphasis on the practical and societal role of religion. While Hegel defends the subjective role of religion in order to foster morality, this would then be used for social purposes and enshrined as a principle of the state. As already mentioned, Rousseau's *On the Social Contract* envisions a civil religion whose main goal is to maintain law and order in human societies – highlighting the belief in God and the immortality of the soul to this end.

In the furthering of morality all religions are equally useful; even ancient Greek religion played an important role in this respect. On the other hand, established religion stands in the way of human freedom and does not serve to promote morality, given that the common folk are unable to understand the fine points

²⁰ Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, p. 78.

²¹ Stepelevich, *The Young Hegelians*, p. 3.

²² Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, p. 76.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁴ Various scholars note that the young Hegel, although critical of positive religion in the form of Judaism or Christianity, strongly defended a religion of love and life, later becoming wary of philosophy, including Kant's practical philosophy. Philosophy must cede its place to religion, which solves any conflicts or contradictions, a role he would later attribute specifically to philosophy and conceptual thinking; see Bernard Bourgeois, *Hegel à Francfort, ou Judaïsme – Christianisme – Hegelianisme* (Paris: Vrin, 2000), p. 27. For the young Hegel, love is a precursor of the Spirit, *ibid.*, p. 64. Life is the truth of love, *ibid.*, p. 82.

of Christian doctrine. Therefore, a simpler religion must be found for them that is effective in bringing about the desired results. These two aspects, the supremacy of morality or virtue in religion, and the need for the political state to promote morality, are two aspects of Enlightenment religion that form a civil or natural religion.

In addition, a Romantic influence can be seen at work in Hegel's early positions, which go beyond a mere rehearsal of Enlightenment approaches to religion. There is a stress on the individual human subject and his or her need to interiorise these principles of religion. Thus, religion does not merely serve as a means to bring about morality in people who would otherwise not willingly coexist in a peaceful manner. This Romantic aspect, as we have seen, is borne out by Hegel's emphasis on love and beauty, which must accompany each believer's religious adherence. Therefore, religion in us must be the result of an inner conviction rather than an external imposition in the form of doctrines and rituals.

The Positivity of the Christian Religion, also dating from the period Hegel spent in Bern, has much in common with the fragments on Christianity and folk religion written earlier. The idea of positivity, which is also found in Hegel's later writings, indicates the objective, external, authoritative character of something – religion in this case. More specifically, it points to something that is imposed from without.²⁵ In this work he again comments in great detail on several episodes of Jesus' life as narrated in the Gospels, explaining how Christianity became a positive religion, displaying outward signs, and eventually becoming intertwined with political power. His stress is once more on the notion of morality as the intrinsic goal of religion, and of Christianity in particular.

In this context, he mentions the community of the Essenes, who construed religion as a means to promote virtue and morality.²⁶ Hegel seeks to uncover the way in which Christianity became a positive religion through the person of Jesus, and to determine which of its aspects were used for this purpose. He argues that initially Christianity was not a positive religion, but rather a religion of virtue. It was the spirit of the times that produced a positive religion, with the development of doctrine. Hegel discerns three moments in this process: Christianity is first a religion of virtue. It then became a sect – through the work of the Apostles. Finally it became a positive religion – with a stress on doctrine and dogma where Jesus had focused on virtue. This positivity is explained in the way in which morality become codified as doctrine, through the agency of Jesus' friends.

Hegel also highlights the significance of miracles in the development of doctrine and in turning Christianity into a positive religion. The theme of miracles and their status in religion is pervasive in Hegel's writings and is taken up again in the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*. He does not oppose the notion of miracles as such, but rather their exploitation with a view to impose dogma and the attempt to tie them to morality. Miracles draw people's attention to the teacher

²⁵ Roger Garaudy, *Dieu est mort: étude sur Hegel* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p. 83.

²⁶ Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, p. 106.

who performs them, thus legitimising his moral authority.²⁷ Later in life, Hegel would also problematise miracles because of their externality – whereas in reality faith is belief in something which is not seen. Therefore we should not rely on the testimony of miracles in order to bring about faith. His criticism of the focus on miracles in these early writings is prompted by their role in the advancement of doctrine.

In addition, Hegel argues that the link between religion and politics was not initially present, given that the disciples of Jesus did not have a political agenda (whereas Socrates was interested in discussing politics), but it would become central later in the history of the Church.

In *The Positivity of Christian Religion*, where he dissociates religion from politics, he contrasts the notion of a state religion to Jesus' intention of awakening in his followers a sense of morality. For Hegel, the link between Church and state and the state's role in promoting morality was something that came later and went hand in hand with the institutionalisation of the Church. He does not believe that the state can impose morals, and he appears to prefer religion to be a personal matter of morals, which would no doubt have an impact, albeit not direct, on the state and the government. Moral citizens should constitute the nation, but the moral law should not come from the state, because it should not be imposed from outside. Even belief should not be imposed from outside – in spite of the close link between Church and state found both in Catholic and Protestant countries, and as something endorsed by both traditions. Hegel suggests that Jesus sought an internalisation of the law rather than an external law imposed outwardly. This was the goal of religion, in contrast to a religion imposed by the religious authorities, as in ancient Israel. Hegel shuns legality as a means of forcing morality, in the sense that morals should not be imposed by an external law. Hegel furthermore believes in equality among the followers of Jesus, who were his friends without distinction. The imposition of doctrine appears to Hegel to be an intolerance of other opinions and an obstacle to a universal peace which Jesus wished to institute.

Hegel goes on to compare religion, in particular Christianity, with philosophy. In the criticisms he levels at an institutionalised Church with its dogmas, he does not attack Jesus himself, but rather his followers, who he says changed the nature of Jesus' intended message. The criticism levelled against Christianity does not touch the person of Jesus, even though some of Hegel's interpretations of the Gospels are highly selective (such as his claim to the effect that the Last Supper was not intended as a sacrament but became one at the hands of Christians). Hegel does not spare the Catholic or the Protestant traditions from criticism – although he does note the difference between them in this respect, given that the Protestant Church is subordinate to the state while the Catholic Church is not. In this situation, for an individual to be excluded from the Church implies also exclusion from the state, while Hegel advocates a higher degree of separation between Church and state. The sacraments in the Church, such as baptism, have become civil acts and the

²⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

Church a society within the state.²⁸ Hegel proposes a looser link between Church and state and religious tolerance on the part of the state. One thus ought to be allowed to think freely and faith should not be imposed by state and Church.

Religious education does not promote freedom of thought, even though Hegel believes that a certain freedom is allowed in the Protestant tradition, with an attention to set positions, specifically when it comes to theological concepts. Hegel believes that this freedom existed for people in the early Church and was then restricted to a select few.

In turn, philosophy makes no distinctions among its practitioners and, as there is no hierarchy, it accepts various opinions. The only judge in philosophy is reason, whereas doctrine has the upper hand in Christianity.²⁹ He opposes a philosophical to a positive 'sect', whose positive character was imposed by its followers.

After providing his own personal interpretation of the Gospels, and of central moments of the life Jesus such as the Last Supper, as well as the sacraments, Hegel proceeds to attack both the Catholic and the Protestant Churches, in spite of remarking that in the Protestant Church, according to Luther, there is no attempt at imposing a particular way of interpreting the faith; rather, each Protestant has his or her own faith.³⁰ In contrast, the Catholic Church defines and imposes her faith. Moreover, there is no support for a dogma of infallibility in the Protestant Church, which seeks to foster morals and virtue rather than highlighting symbols. This was the original goal of the Protestant Church, fighting against authority. However, this goal was betrayed as the Protestant Church developed and maintained strong ties to the state: in the same way that Catholic states support the Catholic Church, Protestant states support their churches. Hegel proposes a free exercise of religion and religious freedom within the state, in which the state would not enforce any kind of religious adherence. Furthermore, in the Protestant Church morality is not based on freedom, as it ought to be.³¹ In his estimation, the Church represses free will and reason when in fact the spirit is not fettered by rules and commandments – the motivation to act morally should be inward. Therefore Jesus' stated goal to liberate from the slavery of the law has not been accomplished, according to the young Hegel.³²

The appendices to *The Positivity of Christian Religion*, stress the significance of putting faith to the test of reason, while highlighting the difficulty that the understanding has to come to terms with miracles as historical truths. This is a theme that we also find in later writings, in particular the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, although these seem more accepting of miracles and of the transcendent in general.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 150.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 124.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 163.

³¹ Ibid., p. 179.

³² Ibid., p. 184.

In this context, Hegel mentions the difference between understanding and representation, a theme that features in the early writings but becomes much more salient in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, particularly, and also in the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*. It is the representation but not the understanding which accepts miracles and supernatural causes.

Hegel links the possibility of believing in miracles to the notion of positive religion, an objective religion, and to an absolute idea of God. Miracles are processed by the imagination and not the understanding. They are moreover associated with a belief in the powerlessness of reason.³³ It is the understanding, not reason, which fights the notion of miracles by invoking the laws of nature. Reason accepts another principle than itself at work in nature, such as God, and hence accepts miracles.

Representation appears here linked to a specifically religious phenomenon, and the faculties of understanding and representation (also potentially equated with imagination) become polarised. The latter is linked to religion, while the former is identified with philosophical thinking. Hegel argues that faith means not to know that reason in itself is complete. Attempts to prove God's existence through reason are actually made for the sake of morality.³⁴ Positive, objective religion (identified with the religion of the Church, as we have seen) goes hand in hand with imagination, and is used to sustain moral faith. The identification of positive religion with national identity also limits its potential for more universal outreach.

The theme of Greek religion is very much in Hegel's mind, as it would be later in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It would be also revisited in the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*. This interest follows in the wake of a renewed attention to classical Antiquity during the Enlightenment, an interest which had been revived in the Renaissance, promoting a new humanism.

This approach to Greek culture and religion is not without some ambivalence, for although Hegel admires in Greek religion a lack of concern for set doctrines (given that the Greeks had no fixed scriptural text as the Jews and the Christians had) and the perceived joy of Greek religion, this religion was not without its dark elements, as he states in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the early writings, he claims that Greek and Roman religion are for free peoples, while Christianity did not spread through reason.³⁵ This admiring appraisal of Roman religion as encouraging personal freedom would be qualified in the Berlin lectures.

Some shortcomings of Greek religion appear in its disregard for a closer attention to the question of the immortality of the soul and the status of the individual in the afterlife. The pagan gods, moreover, resemble human individuals too closely. A political and religious individualism develops throughout the history of Athens and Rome. During the Roman Republic, according to Montesquieu, mentioned by Hegel, virtue is the underlying principle, and the soul is considered

³³ Ibid., p. 214.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 196.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 204.

to be immortal – a view which has an impact on moral theories.³⁶ Because of a lack of freedom on earth (during the Roman Empire) people sought consolation in the afterlife. Greek religion lacks a focus on the absolute (this could also be seen as a weakness of polytheism) and lacks also the notions of sin and pity. This absolute would be discovered within Christian religion, where the Christian God is omnipresent.³⁷ However, sentimentality and enthusiasm (*Schwaermerei*) is a characteristic also of Christian religion, and arises in the faculty of representation. At the same time, the Christian God is more aloof and abstract. More is demanded of the individual believer, in its stress on personal holiness (which Hegel claims to replace morality).³⁸

In a new version of the opening of *The Positivity of Christian Religion*, dating from 1800, Hegel again stresses the significance of feeling to the detriment of understanding in religion – and also the fact that the various positive religions differ from a natural religion of humankind, which is an innate phenomenon.³⁹ While attacking the idea of doctrine as a remnant of the Middle Ages, Hegel asks whether Christianity can be considered a positive religion. Everything that is good in human beings is divine and comes from God. A religion becomes positive if it involves the notion of an utterly overpowering and alien (*fremd*) God, although it is part of human nature to acknowledge a higher being. Hegel concludes that Jesus' doctrine became increasingly more positive at the hands of his followers, who were still holding Jewish law as a guiding framework. Hegel favours a religion of virtue over the mere adherence to set precepts.

In his sketches on *Religion and Love* (dating from Frankfurt, 1797–8), Hegel still opposes the moral and the objective, and considers that actions such as miracles, apparitions and revelation are positive. In addition, objective decrees do not stem from the subject, and do not constitute its actions.⁴⁰ In this work, some dominant features of his philosophy that Hegel would later develop come to the fore, such as the notion of reconciliation, in particular the reconciliation between subject and object, alongside the claim that the deity is both subject and object, and not just an object to be venerated – these are all views that would be reiterated and developed in the Berlin lectures. In a passage that could have been written by one of the Young Hegelians, he states that the deity is the love that becomes being (*Wesen*) through the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), which unites a human being to his or her object.⁴¹ It is love rather than understanding which unites, while understanding separates – a leitmotiv in Hegel.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 206.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 208.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 210.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 219.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 241.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 242.

The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate

Another important early writing, *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, includes reflections on Christianity and Judaism. Abraham is contrasted to the spirit of love and embodies the opposition between Jews and the rest of the world, an attitude which he compares negatively with that of Greece, which was all-inclusive – the Greek mysteries were open to all.⁴² He argues that in Judaism there was a great concern for physical preservation and survival rather than an idea of freedom or a stress on the eternal truths, and God was wholly transcendent. Because morality for Hegel is grounded in love, Judaism does not contemplate morality. It is Jesus who proposes an inner law. Hegel identifies the true Jesus with the portrayal offered by the Gospel of St John. Duty is replaced by love, and the laws are replaced by justice. Love bridges the gap between subject and object. Love is the measure by which everything is judged. Divorce is rejected by Jesus because it breaks the law of love. Love brings equality and orders one not to kill. Love is the judge of every action. This love is the opposite of an external law. In turn, life and love become identified. Reconciliation is effected through love, and followers of Jesus are not his servants, as he explicitly calls him friends. This love allows for a reconciliation with fate and virtue. Love complements the virtues.⁴³ This love represents a unity not of concept but of spirit.

Hegel had already reflected on the Last Supper and its meaning, in the *Positivity of Christian Religion*, where he argued that it was originally a farewell supper, which Christians had turned into a commandment. In *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* the Last Supper is considered a union of love, which, as objectified through imagination, can become the object of religious worship. Actions are expressions of love, which is then still only feeling, not an image (*Bild*). This action then becomes objectified, and ultimately it oscillates between a common meal of friendship and a religious act.

In his interpretation the Last Supper is itself friendship, not just a sign of friendship, and the union of the Apostles with Jesus is not just felt but objectively seen, as a mystical action.⁴⁴ All become one in the Spirit, as well as through the shared bread and wine, which are more than bread and wine.⁴⁵ In the Last Supper Jesus becomes part of the Apostles, the disciples are one in the Spirit of Jesus. Hegel holds that this meal signifies a return to the subjective, to the extent that the experienced objects disappear as such. The material aspect comes to an end. The corporeal gives way to the spiritual and to faith.⁴⁶

Hegel reflects on the fact that the Logos is reason in commenting on the Gospel of St John. He remarks that the world is not an emanation of divinity although it is

⁴² Ibid., p. 285.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 362.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 365.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 366.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 368.

caused by God. The divine, in particular form, appears as a human being. For him, the union of infinite and finite is a mystery.

Jesus can be understood as Son of the Father through faith or cognition (*Erkenntnis*), although the understanding tends to grasp the human and the divine nature of God as separate, as held by the Jews. Thus it is important to go beyond the understanding as a faculty.⁴⁷

Qualifying the role of knowledge, Hegel asserts that the essence of Jesus as relation of Son to Father can only be grasped through faith. It is the (human) spirit which recognises divine Spirit. Something divine in him who believes allows faith. Belief in the deity is made possible by the divinity of our own nature.

Hegel comments on the role of sin in recalling that, according to scripture, a sin against the Spirit, as opposed to against an individual, cannot be forgiven. This Spirit is identified with God and with life. Hegel goes on to refer to the scriptural passage to the effect that John baptises with water, Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16). The link between spirit, love and life is stressed as the true meaning of religion. Love is the union of life, and the new commandment enjoined by Jesus is to love one another. The communal aspect of religion also comes to the foreground, as the kingdom of God is characterised by Jesus as harmony among human beings and communion with God.⁴⁸ At the same time, Hegel concedes that God's kingdom is quite different and separate from the political state. This goes hand in hand with Jesus' repudiation of the world. Hegel acknowledges that the high point of the human spirit lies in an impulse towards religion, but the relation to God does not exclude a communitarian dimension.⁴⁹

In this work Hegel grapples with the idea of miracles and their role in religion, particularly in Christianity, arguing that a miracle stipulates the existence of an infinite cause for a finite effect. He adds that when God acts, it is from Spirit to spirit, although a miracle implies an effect on a body, and in this sense seems to represent something contrary to the divine and spiritual.⁵⁰ The disciples, however, did not distinguish between spirit and the corporeal like modern Europeans.⁵¹

The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate contains reflections on Christian theology and dogmatics – now not simply attacked and rejected, but accepted and analysed in their theoretical and theological meaning – which prefigure later discussions, particularly in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the Berlin lectures. Thus this work marks the beginning of such theological reflections, which depart from the anti-theological orientation of previous early writings.

To conclude, the early writings show that Hegel's main inspiration was drawn from the Bible and in particular the New Testament, which is not surprising in view of his theological studies in Tübingen. He is critical of several aspects of

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 380.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 394.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 406.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 413.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 417.

organised religion and the concept of doctrine. He produces his own interpretation of key scriptural passages, not adopting a literal or either a Catholic or a Protestant reading. In other words, in spite of his Protestant upbringing, his criticism of established religion does not spare the Protestant Church, in particular its alliance with political states.

With regard to the differences between philosophy and religion, and religious versus philosophical language, we see that in some writings he identifies Socrates with philosophy and the philosopher by excellence, and Jesus with religion, specifically Christianity. He also identifies the faculty of representation or imagination with religion, but does not develop this connection to the extent found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Although he is critical of organised religion, which he states was first established by the followers of Jesus, in particular the Apostles, he is seldom critical of Jesus himself and his life and example. Religion, for the young Hegel, should come from the heart and be based on emotion. It also plays an important role in promoting morality.

The contrast between philosophy, as based on reason, and religion, as based on the imagination or representation, is present, but not consistently as a well-defined theory in the young Hegel. Nor is his emphasis on reason with its highest expression, the Spirit, absolute. One could argue that although a focus on religion, approached with a critical eye, is an enduring theme in the young as well as the mature Hegel, his whole systematic philosophy, underpinned by the concept of Spirit, had not yet developed. And because the differentiation between representation and religion on the one hand and philosophy and reason or spirit on the other is a cornerstone of his systematic philosophy, he does not yet formulate the comparison and contrast between representation and conceptual thinking at this early stage of his philosophical career. The identification of religion with representation and philosophy with conceptual thinking is instead clearly formulated only in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

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Chapter 5

Hegel: Religion, Philosophy and Consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*¹

The centrality of religion and religious themes is apparent in Hegel's early writings, as we have seen, and this continues into his mature career. His abiding interest can be partly explained by his training as a theologian, but it is also due to his conceptualisation of religion and philosophy as cognate disciplines, given their common and shared content and aims.

A theme that recurs in his reflections on religion is indeed the relation and comparison between philosophy and religion, how they resemble or differ from each other and the way in which they overlap or complement each other. The early so-called theological writings, which have religion as their central theme but are strongly critical of Christian theology, do not yet present us with Hegel's distinct and full-fledged philosophical system; this begins taking shape only once Hegel moves to Jena in the early 1800s. The writings that mediate between *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* display a growing interest in the pursuit of philosophy in its own right. Where religion had been considered key for the reconciliation between human beings and the world or even God, philosophy is now assigned that role, and it comes to be ranked above religion with respect to this task. Thus these writings are less centred on religion and show the direction that Hegel's thought takes, leading up to the position of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which identifies religious discourse with representation and philosophy with conceptual or scientific thinking.

The *Difference between the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy* (1801), in which Hegel offers an appraisal of Fichte's and Schelling's philosophical systems in the light of the recent history of philosophy with particular attention

¹ This chapter is an expanded version of a paper titled 'Representation and Conceptual Thought in Hegel's Philosophy of Religion' which was delivered at the international conference 'Hegel and Religion', hosted by the Religion and Post-Kantian Philosophy Research Cluster at the University of Sydney, Australia, on 14–15 September 2010. I am grateful to the other conference participants for their comments and suggestions regarding my paper.

to Kant's philosophy, defends the idea that it is the task of philosophy to think the absolute – a task which had once been reserved to religion.²

Faith and Knowledge (1802–1803), while devoted to discussing aspects of Kant's, Jacobi's and Fichte's philosophy, introduces some important themes in Hegel's own philosophy, such as a preference for reason over the understanding, since the former can reconcile oppositions which the latter establishes. In addition, Hegel states that the idea of absolute freedom belongs to philosophy, and it is the task of philosophy to treat religious matters. There is equally a suggestion of a replacement of religion with philosophy, or at least of a speculative interpretation of religious topics, when he recommends the establishment of 'the speculative Good Friday in place of the historic Good Friday' and argues to the effect that 'Good Friday must be speculatively re-established'.³

Other, later writings, dating from the Jena period, clearly prepare the ground for Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, such as his *System of Ethical Life* and his *First Philosophy of Spirit*, dating from 1802–1804. A later *Philosophy of Spirit* dating from 1805–1806 shows a preference for Christianity over other religions because of its doctrine of the Incarnation of God, which bridges the gap between the human and the divine. Moreover, the triad of art, religion and philosophy is presented, in a process in which art finds its justification in religion, and religion finds its justification in philosophy. Religion is here moreover identified with immediate experience, while philosophy constitutes the absolute science or knowing and embodies conceptual thinking.⁴

The articulation between philosophy and religion, already at work in his early writings and in the first Jena writings, turns on Hegel's differentiation between two methods of approaching the same content, in particular the distinction between representation (or picture-thinking, as *Vorstellung* is sometimes translated) and concept or conceptual thinking (*Begriff*) – a distinction that becomes fully developed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. To put it broadly, the former might involve the imagination or picturing through images, while, by contrast, conceptual thinking is purely intellectual, and significantly, for Hegel, the highest form of apprehension. This distinction was seminally present in the early writings, where Hegel distinguishes between the imagination and the understanding, but these do not yet correspond to the distinction between representation and conceptual

² G.W.F. Hegel, *The Difference Between the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy*, trans. intro. and notes Jere Paul Surber (Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1978), p. 15.

³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 191.

⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel and the Human Spirit*, translation of the *Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805–1806)* with commentary by Leo Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), p. 181. See also G.W.F. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life (1802/3) and First Philosophy of Spirit (Part III of the System of Speculative Philosophy 1803/4)*, ed. and trans. H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), pp. 81–5.

thinking, which are sharply defined and compared in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the early writings, Hegel is still tied to the various faculties mentioned by Kant, such as imagination, understanding and reason, even though he was critical of Kant's conception of the remit and capabilities of these various human faculties.

The notion of conceptual thinking as underpinning philosophical speculation and representing the highest form of knowing is characteristic of the later Hegel and is developed in Jena. Various scholars argue that Hegel's concept of religion is complete in its broad features by 1805–1806, when he composed the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁵

It appears, and certain scholars have certainly drawn the conclusion, that the faculty, or process, in which religious thought is grounded is representation, while conceptual thinking is reserved for philosophy and philosophers.⁶ Moreover, Hegel states in several passages that in representation, the form or the mode of apprehending the truth does not exactly match the content, while conceptual thinking does present the content as it truly is. Some scholars have questioned the possibility of presenting the same content in different ways.⁷ In addition, representation implies a greater dependence on imagery and more material forms of apprehending the objects, forms that are closer to sense perception, the five senses and in particular sight. The assumed association between representation and religion on the one hand, and philosophy and conceptual thinking on the other, seems to place religion in a subordinate position vis-à-vis philosophy. If religion is associated with an inferior level of apprehension, and philosophy with a more accurate, scientific, and higher level of expression, then the latter is the worthier discipline. This position would run counter to Hegel's own claim to the effect that philosophy shares its content with religion and both adequately represent God's nature.

⁵ See Walter Jaeschke, 'Die Flucht vor dem Begriff: Ein Jahrzehnt Literatur zur Religionsphilosophie (1971–1981)', *Hegel-Studien* 18 (1983): pp. 295–354, p. 315.

⁶ D'Hondt states that for Hegel art shares the same content as religion and philosophy; Jacques D'Hondt, 'La Philosophie de la Religion de Hegel', in *Hegel et la Religion*, ed. Guy Planty-Bonjour, (Paris: PUF, 1982), p. 12. Art is even closer to sensibility than is religion, and so it is a lower form of approach to the content. He further claims that Hegel clearly distinguishes image (*Bild*) from representation (*Vorstellung*), associating the former with religion in the form of art, and the latter with absolute religion, that is to say, Lutheran Christianity, *ibid.*, p. 21. In turn, Hodgson claims that 'representation has two basic forms, or configurations: sensible and nonsensible', the first involving images (*Bilder*) and the latter a spiritual content; see Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 112. Hodgson further notes that thought differs from representation in that it uses dialectic, adding that 'immediacy is the principle of representation, while for thought mediation is essential', *ibid.*, p. 114.

⁷ Falk Wagner, 'Die Aufhebung der religiösen Vorstellung in den philosophischen Begriff', *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 18 (1976): pp. 44–73, p. 46.

Moreover, since Hegel insists on the organic nature of the Spirit and its progressive development, all forms of knowledge are included in the Spirit's gradual process of coming to know itself, albeit in a hierarchical fashion. In this scheme, representation ranks lower than conceptual thinking. In the *Phenomenology's* section devoted to religion, 'representation' (*Vorstellung*), precedes a more conceptual way of understanding reality, which is 'concept' (*Begriff*), where the Spirit finally comes to know itself as Spirit.

Understanding the nature of the two modes of apprehension and the relationship between them is vital for uncovering the connection between religion and philosophy, their similarities and differences. This examination moreover aims to shed light on Hegel's philosophy of religion, as well as other aspects of his philosophy.

Does religion have a different and proper means of expression in relation to philosophy, as well as a different content? Hegel affirms in several places that the content of religion and that of philosophy is the same, with the proviso that the mode of expression differs. An examination of Hegel's understanding of representation in connection with religious thought in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* will help to clarify this matter.

Representation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

The articulation between representation and conceptual thinking is first systematically laid out in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, one of Hegel's most influential works, which addresses explicitly the question of the relationship between philosophy and religion. It views them not just as static disciplines, but as necessary moments in the life of the self-evolving Spirit. It lays out the organic process of the Spirit, in its journey towards absolute knowing from the point of view of the subject, proceeding from consciousness (where we find, for instance, sense perception, the lowest level of perceptive awareness) to self-consciousness, through to the highest realm, where reason, spirit and religion (which includes art) are found, and finally, to absolute knowing. Each stage represents a higher form of consciousness for the Spirit. While religion stands nearly at the peak of the system, it does not represent the highest expression of the Spirit, this position is occupied by absolute knowing, implicitly identified with philosophy. Another important form of self-expression of the Spirit is art, although in the *Phenomenology* it is associated with religion – in the subchapter on religion in the form of art. The highest forms of expression which lead up to absolute knowing are thus art and religion, with philosophy topping the process and completing the system.

In one way, religion is closely connected with representation, but representation makes its appearance before the chapter devoted to the various forms of religion. It is described there as a specific and somewhat autonomous faculty or way

of thinking.⁸ Is representation the sole mode of apprehension in religious thought? And is it associated with religion as a whole or only with certain religions or aspects of religion? It is worth recalling the various forms of cognition or consciousness that make up this phenomenology of Spirit, which analyses, as the title indicates, the various ways in which the Spirit appears to us and to itself. We thus first find simply consciousness, which then develops into self-consciousness and reason, corresponding to Hegel's dialectic, which implies a triadic system. In the wake of reason we find spirit, religion and absolute knowing. Within the chapter on reason, Hegel pauses to take stock of the stages covered by consciousness. In the same way that consciousness includes the moments of sense-certainty, perception and understanding, reason will move from observing reason, which includes aspects of scientific knowledge, to particular and, finally, universal reason, the latter stages presupposing self-consciousness.⁹ Ethics and morality belong in the next, more developed stage, Spirit. Art is treated as part of religion, which then becomes absolute knowing, a final stage which can be identified with philosophy. Several scholars note how Hegel favours religion and its educational potentialities over art, at a time when art was considered a vehicle of and a means to teach the truth.¹⁰ There are references to representation or picture-thinking, as well as conceptual thinking, well before the extensive treatment of religion and philosophy.

In the Preface, which advances many central themes of Hegel's system, he claims that truth is scientific, which amounts to saying that it is manifested in a conceptual way, indeed that concept is the true element of truth. In this passage, conceptual thinking entails the claim to the possibility of knowing the absolute, and not in an intuitive or immediate way.¹¹ It is the task of reason and conceptual thinking to study and attain to the divine and the absolute, within the framework of a philosophical inquiry. This early appearance of the notion of conceptual thinking in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* follows from and is meant to buttress Hegel's claim for the possibility of reason to know the absolute in a philosophical, rather than an immediate, intuitive or mystical way.

Another allusion to representation or picture-thinking in the Preface appears to suggest its flexibility, pointing to its ability to move beyond the categories of subject and predicate in a sentence, and not remain fixated in the opposition between them, which is a tendency observable in the human faculty of the understanding.¹² Hegel asserts that the truth is not a ready-made object; it requires a cognitive process

⁸ Chapelle argues that representation is not, technically speaking, a 'faculty', but an act of the spirit; see Albert Chapelle, *Hegel et la Religion*, vol. I: *La problématique* (Paris, Editions universitaires, 1963), p. 120.

⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, analysis and foreword by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 111, §348.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Walter A. Kaufmann, 'Hegel's Early Antitheological Phase', *The Philosophical Review* 63:1 (Jan. 1954): pp. 3–18, p. 8.

¹¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 4, §6.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 37, §60.

on our part and on the part of the Spirit that comes to know itself. That process is dialectic, whereby the subject of knowledge is able to articulate and integrate opposing principles and reach a complete knowledge of the whole.¹³ Conceptual thinking is closely bound up with dialectic, as distinct from understanding, for instance, whose task and remit lies in making and keeping distinctions between the various objects known, rather than interrelating them. Representation, in turn, does not include dialectical thinking/method.¹⁴ Moreover, notional/conceptual rational thinking far surpasses the methods and results of common sense knowledge on the one hand and intuition on the other, thereby producing true scientific, certain knowledge.¹⁵ Already in the Preface, Hegel identifies conceptual thinking with speculative philosophy, which yields absolute knowledge. In this Preface, which can also be considered an introduction to his philosophical system and not just to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel lays out his plan for the whole work and also his vision of what science, that is, true knowledge, should look like.

He endeavours to distinguish two common and contemporary approaches to knowledge that he seeks to keep at bay. On the one hand, Hegel does not believe in an attainment of the absolute that is immediate and intuitive and does not make use of the negative and the dialectical movement between opposites. Hegel also rejects the claim of empirical knowledge, based on sense perception, to the totality of knowledge. Sense perception has a role to play in the process of attaining knowledge, but it is a limited role that has to move on to the higher spheres of reason and the spirit. Empirical knowledge and mystical experience both fail to attain to the absolute as it is. According to Hegel it is a certain approach, speculative reasoning employing conceptual thinking, that alone transcends the empirical and grasps the absolute, which empirical knowledge cannot expect to do. Representational thinking has the disadvantage of lying somewhere between

¹³ For Hegel, dialectic is the tool used by scientific, philosophical knowledge, and its outcome is positive. He credits Plato with the invention of dialectic. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. William Wallace, foreword by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 112 (§78) and pp. 115–19 (§81).

¹⁴ See Martin J. De Nys, *Hegel and Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), p. 56. For Hegel, dialectic is the ultimate logical method, used by philosophy, since it permits the reconciliation of contraries. As Gadamer points out, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the dialectic method is the scientific method; see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. and intro. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 83. Gadamer further notes the finality of dialectic for Hegel: 'The Ancients ... held that the working out of dialectical contradictions was only a study which prepared one for actual knowing. Hegel, on the other hand converts this propaedeutic or negative purpose of dialectic into a positive one. For Hegel the point of dialectic is that precisely by pushing a position to the point of self-contradiction it makes possible the transition to a higher truth which unites the sides of that contradiction: the power of spirit lies in synthesis as the mediation of all contradictions', *ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 40, §66, pp. 43–4, §§70–71.

sense experience and an immediate knowledge and intuition of the object, and it falls short of the concept. This placement of representation with regard to sense perception and the intuition sets the tone for later exposition of what representation or picture-thinking means.¹⁶

Later in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, within the chapter devoted to self-consciousness, in particular the freedom of self-consciousness, which emerged from the master and slave relationship, the connection is established between thinking and the notion or concept, in contrast to representation. The former includes in itself its self-identity. Representation or picture-thinking still involves the dichotomy between subject and object, which is other than consciousness.¹⁷ The object of the concept is purely notional and spiritual, a fact that generates the identity, indeed the unity, between subject and object. In this movement away from representation and into conceptual thinking, the subject is freed from the otherness of the object and is in communion with itself.¹⁸ The sublation of the otherness within itself, at once annulling and integrating it, leads to the next figure of the spirit, Stoicism, in which self-consciousness remains hostile to the otherness surrounding it. Stoicism turns into Scepticism and finally into the unhappy consciousness, which some scholars have viewed as a veiled criticism of medieval Christendom, in which consciousness knows the absolute or unchangeable as an individual, and relates to it not as a thinking consciousness but in a devotional way. The relationship itself to this absolute is not one of pure thinking, but a stage towards thinking. Here the object remains something alien to the consciousness, remaining alien and separated from it, as an unattainable beyond.¹⁹ The resolution of this last stage of self-consciousness, represented by the unhappy consciousness, ushers in the appearance of reason, or consciousness in the form of reason.

¹⁶ De Nys stresses the fact that representations can be drawn from sense perception but they can be more conceptual than that; De Nys, *Hegel and Theology*, p. 34. According to Clark, whose study examines 'Hegel's conception of the relation of language to thought: that is, of the transition from "Vorstellung" to "Denken"', from a linguistic perspective, states that 'Hegel speaks indiscriminately of "die Vorstellung" and "das Vorstellen"'. In a paragraph of the *Encyclopedia* [§20] where he compares it to thought, he points out that the latter may be seen as an agent, an activity, and the product of this activity. So *Vorstellung* is used for a faculty, an activity, and its product (assuming the position of common sense which would distinguish the three). The translators of the *Wissenschaft der Logik* admit that difficulty arose at each occurrence of this word. They have rendered it as 'sensuous representation, image, imagination, presentation, idea, general idea, ideation', Malcolm Clark, *Logic and System: A Study of the Transition from "Vorstellung" to Thought in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 15 and pp. 26–7.

¹⁷ Representation expresses primarily the particular and is a moment of non-identity, as opposed to speculative thinking, which effects the desired identity between subject and object; see Albert Chapelle, *Hegel et la religion*, vol. II: *La dialectique: Dieu et la Création* (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1967), p. 160.

¹⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 120, §197.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 130–31, §216.

Representation is also closely bound up with the imagination. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably by Hegel. It implies the visualisation of a particular object in the mind, and a dependence on sense perception, in particular the sense of sight. In this regard, representation is closer to the material, or to matter, than is conceptual thinking, which is the highest form of thinking, and has dissociated itself from matter. Representation displays some of the shortcomings of the faculty of the understanding, namely in not being able to see opposites as part of a whole, and not attaining to the infinite, while conceptual thinking is able to do both. Conceptual thinking is paired up with reason as a higher intellectual faculty than understanding.²⁰

Hegel deals with representation in the passages on the unhappy consciousness, which depicts a kind of religious consciousness, while conceptual thinking, identified with philosophical thinking, remains in the background, coming into the fore towards the end of the work as Hegel expounds absolute knowing; representational thinking surfaces again in the context of a discussion on faith.

Faith and the Enlightenment

Within the chapter devoted to spirit, which marks a higher stage of consciousness than that of reason, Hegel mentions cultural and historical aspects in which we see the spirit mirrored as it advances towards absolute knowing. Before embarking upon the Enlightenment, Hegel discusses those pre-Enlightenment aspects against which the Enlightenment launched a backlash, namely faith and pure insight. In this context faith represents a flight from reality, but also the world of pure consciousness: it dwells firmly within itself. For consciousness in the form of faith, the underlying activity is not thought itself. It thinks an essence that is beyond itself but that it considers as truly existing.²¹ This consideration of a transcendent object constitutes religion in one of its forms, namely as faith within the context of the world of culture.

Religion had already appeared in the form of the unhappy consciousness, and also as faith in the underworld, within the context of ethics, more specifically as the conviction of the existence of the departed spirits of family members in Ancient Greece. This would not constitute faith in a transcendent being, however, but rather in the family, so it is not, properly speaking, faith, as Hegel states. The

²⁰ Ibid., p. 210, §346.

²¹ Ibid., p. 322, §528. Jamros points out that for Hegel, faith is not yet ‘the self-consciousness of spirit’; Daniel P. Jamros, S.J., *The Human Shape of God: Religion in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Paragon House, 1994), p. 7. However, it ‘knows God by pure thinking rather than by sensory knowing’ and the ‘God of faith is pure thinking in the form of an object “imagined”’, *ibid.*, p. 65. Jamros also notes that in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* religion comes after and subsumes reason, as well as understanding, *ibid.*, p. 135.

unhappy consciousness could refer to medieval Christendom, and the faith in the underworld appears to point to the distinction between divine and human law, illustrated by the drama of Antigone.

This third approach to faith differs in that it now comes from the substance (*Substanz*), that is, something external to the consciousness itself. In being thus partly alienated from itself, it is still belief rather than faith, given that the union with its object has not yet been achieved.²² At this stage, faith includes and supersedes the former figure of consciousness as pure insight, which is a reflection upon itself. Faith also includes the thought of an external being. Faith goes over and above insight in that it has a content, whereas insight is pure self-consciousness. A crucial aspect of faith, according to Hegel, is thought, which however is not yet conceptual thinking.²³ This thought bears the characteristics of immediacy and simplicity. Because of these characteristics, there is an element of imagination in faith, whose content lies in this super-sensible other. Faith first appears as a further stage towards the development of the spirit, but once insight becomes part and parcel of the Enlightenment movement, insight turns against faith as superstition, because it does not recognise itself in belief, and does not recognise the object of belief, considering it as the negative of the self-consciousness, and as a sensible object, an idol. It considers the object of faith as representation.

Hegel condemns the Enlightenment for this ascription of faith to individual whim which anthropomorphises absolute being. In this way, it is the Enlightenment point of view that fails to attain to the absolute being. It fails to recognise the absolute being that is indeed the object of faith, even if the latter, while knowing its object, represents it in a non-conceptual way. Hegel denies that faith relies on circumstantial historical evidence as claimed by the Enlightenment position; rather, it is spirit bearing witness to itself, as a 'particular personal conscience in the absolute being', against the Enlightenment's accusation that its object is a product of the consciousness of the believer.²⁴ Hegel would later argue similarly against a literalist approach to scripture and the literalist formulation of dogmatic truths in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. In turn, faith views the Supreme Being (*Être supreme*) of the Enlightenment as a concept devoid of any reality. While the Enlightenment accused faith of representing rather than conceptualising its object, Hegel throws the very same accusation at the Enlightenment, which cannot justify its own beliefs. Here representation bears the marks of sense experience and sensible existence.

Hegel highlights the limits of both positions, the contingent knowledge of faith, where absolute being comes in the form of a pictorial representation.²⁵ He adds that faith oscillates between two kinds of non-conceptual perceptions, a

²² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 322, §528.

²³ De Nys states that 'Hegel identifies essentially three components of religious involvement: faith, representation, and the cultus'; De Nys, *Hegel and Theology*, p. 67.

²⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 338, §554, p. 345, §566.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 346, §567.

‘slumbering’ one and a waking consciousness which lives in the world of sense perception. For both faith and the Enlightenment, the absolute becomes unknown and unknowable.

After treating the appearance of spirit through the Reign of Terror, which was ushered in by the French Revolution, and the beautiful soul, which displays many affinities with the Romantic movement, Hegel again returns to religion, taking us back in human history for that purpose. In the following chapter of the *Phenomenology*, devoted to religion, which takes the Spirit beyond the domain of human reason, Hegel observes, for example, that the religion of the Enlightenment does not seek to grasp a higher reality than reason. Summarising his criticism of the Enlightenment, he states that the latter is its own religion. It uses the understanding and sets up a super-sensible beyond that, however, goes over and above the consciousness which remains satisfied with this world. It does not claim to know that super-sensible reality, which remains for it void.²⁶

Religion represents a higher stage in the development of the Spirit than does (human) reason, but seemingly not the highest, for Hegel stresses that in the kingdom of faith we are not yet in the domain of the notion or concept. Spirit in religion is aware of itself as spirit, but the mode of perception is representational thought, which falls short of a true portrayal of reality as it is in itself. Hegel explains that this mode of thinking is not yet purely spiritual; it is a specific shape, and does not portray the spirit as it sees itself, as purely spiritual and conceptual.²⁷ In religion, the Spirit is not yet pure self-consciousness of itself, and its reality transcends religion, in which Spirit represents or pictures itself to itself. Somehow, religion and its characteristic mode of action, representation, are not purely spiritual (presumably because representation depends on sense images) and do not constitute a complete communion of the Spirit with itself.

Various Forms of Religion

Here Hegel not only treats religion in general, but also introduces the various forms of religion, some of them representing more faithfully the essence and the actuality of religion as such. Hegel reminds us that all the previous forms of consciousness, such as consciousness itself, self-consciousness, reason and spirit, are shapes of the Spirit as it comes to know itself. These shapes are then found again in the various forms of religion analysed by Hegel.

Religion does not yet provide us with a true account of the ultimate reality, the Spirit as it is, and the problem lies with the fact that religion constitutes a particular shape (guise or garb: *Kleid*) whose method is representation, using symbolism or

²⁶ Ibid., p. 411, §675.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 412, §678.

allegory for what it purports to represent or convey.²⁸ But is this the case with all forms of religion?

Hegel goes on to divide religion into three forms: natural religion, religion in the form of art, and revealed religion, a division that respects the triadic nature of his dialectic. Is it possible that in one of these forms of religion, in particular revealed religion, which Hegel equates with Christianity, representation is no longer the main or the only form of conveying the essence of the Spirit as it truly is?

One passage appears to indicate that even revealed religion is trapped in the shape of representation, or picture-thinking:

If, in the first reality [Natural Religion], Spirit in general is in the form of consciousness, and in the second [Religion of Art], in that of self-consciousness, in the third it is in the form of the unity of both ... this is the Revealed Religion. But although in this, Spirit has indeed attained its true *shape*, yet the shape itself and the picture-thought are still the unvanquished aspect from which Spirit must pass over into the Notion (*Begriff*) ... It is then that Spirit has grasped the Notion of itself, just as we now have first grasped it; and its shape or the element of its existence, being the Notion, is Spirit itself.²⁹

Hegel's position is partly justified by the dialectical movement that must take account of philosophy as well as religion. If the latter were to prove the ultimate form of expression of the Spirit, presenting it as it is in itself, there would be no need to advance to an ulterior form of knowledge. Religion must present some shortcoming, in order to provide an opening for philosophy. Given their obvious differences, which Hegel details at length, philosophy and religion must constitute two different ways of presenting the truth, although, as he stresses, their content is the same.

Hegel considers that different religions represent the various shapes of the Spirit, forming a dialectical process that progresses towards the revealed or manifest religion, Christianity. They are different manifestations of the same spirit, which means that they are contained in and superseded by Christianity. Other world religions receive much greater attention in the *Lectures on Philosophy*

²⁸ According to De Nys, 'Representational thinking includes symbolic images, narrative discourses that take up and elaborate those symbolic images, and conceptual elements that are linked to but also different from symbolic images and their narrative elaborations'; De Nys, *Hegel and Theology*, p. 11. For Hegel, as for Averroes, the symbolical and the allegorical work at two levels, as the immediate symbol or allegory, and secondly as its inner meaning; *ibid.*, p. 71. He affirms that symbols 'disclose and conceal', *ibid.*, p. 143. Representation includes also historical narrative, *ibid.*, p. 71. According to Fackenheim, representation 'refers to the Infinite in a finite way'; Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 155. With representation, the divine remains other, unlike in philosophy, *ibid.*, p. 185.

²⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 416, §683.

of Religion, where they come under the designation 'determinate religion', since they are considered determinate, specific, aspects of religion. It is important to highlight that while Christianity constitutes the last stage in the succession of the various religious forms, one should bear in mind that it stands apart, such as to warrant a separate analysis of the role of 'representation' in this ultimate form of religion.

Each religion has its own characteristics, but in a certain sense, they all represent the same religion, which culminates in Christianity. These prove to be various aspects of the same religion. They also share common representations. However, the distinction between the various religions must be maintained. They resemble each other but at the same time differ from each other, since they constitute various shapes in which the spirit comes to know itself.³⁰

Natural religion, the first section within religion, comprises three headings, 'God as light', 'Plant and animal' and 'the Artificer'. These forms allow Hegel to include reflections on such religions as those centred on the sun, on the worship of animals and other natural objects. Religion from the first belongs to the domain of the spiritual, rather than the material, and represents the world from the point of view of the spiritual and of a spiritual principle, even if it is identified with a visible natural object. The question of representation appears nuanced here. A lower, previous stage of religion is representation or picture-thought, with regard to its superior, successor shape. Given Hegel's understanding of dialectic, the more developed and spiritual shape of religion must supersede, that is, surpass while including, the inferior shape from which it hailed.

A first form of natural or nature religion, the religion of light, already shows the spirit as self-conscious of being all the truth. Hegel then discusses religion in which particular animals are worshipped; and this is followed, finally, by a discussion of the religion of the artificer (*Werkmeister*), or the Spirit as creator.

A more advanced form of religion is one that incorporates art, which comprises ethical awareness. Religion in the form of art is divided into three headings, on 'the abstract work of art', 'the living work of art' and 'the spiritual work of art'. In religious art we find 'nature transfigured by thought', and a unity between nature and self-conscious spirit.³¹ The individual self-consciousness finds its individual voice in this form of religion which evokes the ancient Greek religious art, in which the self becomes conscious of its unity with the divine being in its worship and sacrifices. The driving force behind this process lies in the progressive spiritualisation of the various forms of art. Some of the themes found in this section of the *Phenomenology* will receive more detailed treatment in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, such as the distinction between the old Greek religion of the Titans and the new religion – embodied in a new generation of gods who come under the aegis of Zeus – which is considered in 'the spiritual work of art'. All forms serve to usher in the revealed religion that is Christianity. In this context

³⁰ Ibid., p. 417, §684.

³¹ Ibid., p. 428, §707.

Hegel mentions the symbolism of the bread and wine in the rites pertaining to Ceres and Bacchus. In a clear reference to the coming of Christianity, Hegel states, 'Spirit has not yet sacrificed itself as *self-conscious* Spirit to self-consciousness, and the mystery of bread and wine is not yet the mystery of flesh and blood'.³² In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel notes how the Hindu religion, for instance, presents a form of a Trinity, though it is not the perfect Trinitarian model found in Christianity.

The passage from polytheism to monotheism is analysed. In the spiritual work of art, where the various spirits coalesce into unity, a form of cult gives way to a representation that does not yet attain to conceptual thinking but is embodied in language, in particular the epic form. In it, the content and the form of consciousness display the same universality. The link between self-consciousness and external existence is expressed through language. Epic in particular is for Hegel the earliest representational expression of the universal.³³ This form of art is naturally literary.

Generally speaking, in religion, representation – or picture-thinking – takes the form of art connected with the particular rather than the universal (a common association in Hegel), and with blind necessity rather than freedom of the Spirit. The world of the Greek gods is squarely equated with this element of the particular and pictorial thought. This element of necessity is eloquently expressed in Greek tragedy.

In addition, the tension between philosophy and representation already makes itself felt here, and it is foreshadowed by Greek tragedy, with its focus on the human fate of individuals.³⁴ While imagination lends divine beings a contingent nature and a superficial individuality, rational thinking frees divine beings precisely from that contingent aspect.³⁵ Later, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel speaks of the way in which philosophy emerges from Greek mythology, and how this is particularly apparent in Plato's philosophy.

Revealed religion presents a further step in the development of the Spirit, where the form of substance assumes 'that of subject', a common theme highlighted by Hegel in the Preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as an essential aspect of his systematic philosophy. It means that we must take the object in its own right, and from its own perspective, and consider it also in its relation to the subject and other objects. At this juncture, this process involves God or the Spirit becoming for the human subject what it is in and for itself. One could also interpret this assertion to mean that in revealed religion the absolute Spirit as subject speaks to us, whereas before religion was rather a product of human consciousness, and did not exactly match its object. Before, the subject imposed its own imagination on the object; now, the divine object reveals itself to the human subject as it is in and for itself, and as a fully self-conscious spirit.

³² Ibid., p. 438, §724.

³³ Ibid., p. 440, §729.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 449, §741.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 451, §746.

Hegel states that through rational thinking, a possible reference to the ancient Greek philosophers, the divine being is freed from its contingent shape, which is produced by imagination. This may be a reference to Plato's conception of the one demiurge and Aristotle's theory of the Prime Mover, both of which appear to run counter to the polytheism prevalent in ancient Greek society. An allusion to the concepts or ideas of the Beautiful and the Good confirms the reference to Plato's philosophy.

Representation and Christianity

This final stage of religion, the revealed religion, represents a stage where Spirit ceases to be substance (conceived by human beings) and becomes subject – God who reveals himself to us. Indeed, the substance becomes not just subject but subject conscious of itself, a self-consciousness that is also for us. Moreover, this self is absolute being. Hegel studies the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, who assumes a human nature in addition to his divine nature. The presence of the two natures renders possible the reconciliation of human beings with God, thus heralding the last phase of the dialectical process in which Spirit becomes in and for itself. This stage is contrasted with that of the unhappy consciousness, where the individual human subject aimed to know the absolute but failed to attain to that absolute through knowledge. The stage of the revealed religion goes beyond that of the unhappy consciousness, in which a loss of the substance and of the self is observable and where the saying 'God is dead' belongs – revealing a partial understanding of the divine.³⁶

In this last section, devoted to religion, Hegel offers a philosophical description of Christianity and the Incarnation of the Word, whereby the 'Spirit is ... present as a self-conscious being', as a man, who can be immediately be seen, felt and heard. Moreover, God is thus immediately perceived as a self, indeed as a self-consciousness. Hegel states that 'this incarnation of the divine Being, or the fact that it essentially and directly has the shape of self-consciousness, is the simple content of the absolute religion', equating absolute religion with Christianity, as he does later in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.³⁷ This religion is the revealed religion because in it we know and are conscious of the divine being as Spirit. Here, in the religious domain, and specifically in Christianity, the substance is truly subject and self, the divine being truly reveals himself to us. The object of religious devotion is now the self who is not an 'other', and is also truly the Creator.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 455, §752. The unhappy consciousness has often been identified with medieval Christendom. However, a yearning for the absolute and the beyond which characterises this consciousness is specifically attributed to Protestantism in Hegel's *Faith and Knowledge*; see Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, pp. 148–9.

³⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 458–9, §§758–9.

In Christianity God reveals himself truly and definitely to humankind, in contrast to the chasm between human conceptions of God and his reality observable in previous forms of religion. Hence the gods of the previous religions were not adequate descriptions of God, nor did they portray the living, self-conscious God revealed in Christianity. Hegel considers this to be the highest form of religion, the absolute, true religion. Does this mean that Christianity is the highest form of the Spirit, and 'representation' is relegated to previous, inferior forms of religious thought? Some passages lead us to believe this, pointing to the true shape of Spirit revealed in Christianity, which is conformed to the concept, a divine self-consciousness that is revealed to the human self-consciousness.³⁸

He further states that 'God is attainable in pure speculative knowledge and is only in that knowledge, and is only that knowledge itself, for He is Spirit; and this speculative knowledge is the knowledge of the *revealed* religion'.³⁹ This seems to affirm that the revealed religion, Christianity, contains the speculative and conceptual knowledge of God as he is, as Spirit and as thought. However, this self, as this particular human being, is still the individual and not the universal concept. A further stage appears to be required for the attainment of absolute knowing.

Representation, or picture-thinking, which is 'the synthetic combination of sensuous immediacy and its universality or Thought',⁴⁰ is still present in this ultimate form of religion, particularly as the spirit becomes aware of itself in the community.

This *form of picture-thinking* constitutes the specific mode in which Spirit, in this community, becomes aware of itself. This form is not yet Spirit's self-consciousness that has advanced to its Notion *qua* Notion: the mediation is still incomplete.⁴¹

This is partly due to a 'split into a Here and a Beyond' which still lingers. We have the true content in revealed religion but the true form is still concealed. While we have the true content in revealed religion, its various moments are linked only externally and not organically. Therefore a 'higher formative development of consciousness is necessary', so that the true content can 'receive its true form for consciousness'.⁴²

These shortcomings of representation are here attributed to the limitations of the community which is identified with revealed religion, the Christian community. In the revealed religion, representation or picture-thinking mediates between pure thought and self-consciousness. Although representation is present in religion, in revealed religion it is specifically identified with the middle term,

³⁸ Ibid., p. 460, §759.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 461, §761.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 463, §764.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 463, §765.

⁴² Ibid., p. 463, §765.

or middle part (the ‘antithesis’), of the dialectical form. Thought descends into individuality, and passing into representation and otherness, it finally returns to self-consciousness.⁴³ Nevertheless, the consciousness found in revealed religion represents a higher form of consciousness than the one belonging to the unhappy consciousness or the believing consciousness. It is important to stress that the concept or conceptual thinking does not consider the particular but rather the universal, whereas representation is still attached in some way to the particular, especially in its connotation with pictorial thinking.

In addition, Hegel links representation with particular concern for historical fact, while the concept (or notion) seemingly rises above history and chronology: ‘picture-thinking interprets and expresses as a *happening* what has just been expressed as the *necessity* of the Notion’.⁴⁴ Necessity here clearly points to the universal, rather than the particular (event or substance). While a true dialectical circle is effected, which implies an utterance of the Word that then returns to its divine origin, this speculative thinking is not the way the religious community understands this process.

Representation appears to lie in the beliefs of the religious community; in this sense one could say that the representational form does not point to a fault of religion itself, but to the inability of the community to grasp transcendent notions. However, certain key elements of Christian dogma are placed by Hegel in the realm of representation. One could argue that Hegel is simply criticising a literal and even physical, rather than a metaphorical, interpretation of the relations among the Persons of the Trinity. In particular, he berates the community for viewing the relation between the Father and the Son from a natural or physical perspective.⁴⁵ Representation again indicates in this context a certain relation to sense perception and physical nature.

In addition to the Incarnation, Hegel comments on the concept of Creation as a self-othering of God, where ‘creating’ is a representational way of describing God’s becoming the other of itself; this is possibly a pantheistic reading of creation, although Hegel would later, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vehemently deny being a pantheist. Hegel conceives of the Spirit as a single entity,

⁴³ Ibid., p. 464, §767.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 465, §769. Clark states, ‘Hence, so far as we are to ascribe properties to the stage of *Vorstellung*, we must say that it shares with sense a spatio-temporality and a mere multiplicity of its elements, but is distinguished from sense by an interiority and universality capable of giving expression to even the most elevated speculative thought. It may be described as a picture-thinking, but as one in which the pictures are recognized for such, as carrying a meaning not simply to be identified with them’; Clark, *Logic and System*, p. 27. He further argues to the effect that ‘*Vorstellung* is the “other” of thought, and yet is “interior” to it’, *ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 465, §771.

a 'simple oneness' – evoking in the mind of the reader Aristotle's understanding of God as thought thinking itself.⁴⁶

Hegel analyses various Christian doctrines in the light of the dichotomy between representation and conceptual thinking. Doctrines that are speculatively (conceptually) reinterpreted due to the potential for a representational reading include the Trinity and its Persons, Creation, and Lucifer as a fallen angel. Hegel considers the terms 'Son' and 'fallen' to belong to representation rather than thought.⁴⁷ Moreover, it is a shortcoming of representation that it cannot integrate evil into the divine plan, and cannot reconcile opposites, whereas conceptual thinking dictates precisely just such reconciliation – nothing is other to the absolute being.⁴⁸

However, in order to salvage core elements of Christian theology in Hegel's thought, one could argue that the shortcomings of the representational mode come down to the difficulty of the Christian community – and, generally speaking, of human nature – to think of God as he really is. A possible indication of this interpretation is that representational thought, which is characteristic of religion, in its immediacy 'knows the human form of the divine Being at first only as a particular, not yet as a universal, form.'⁴⁹

At a later stage, the Spirit as self-consciousness, in its universality, no longer thinks in images. This moment too is identified with the community. But here it is unclear whether the reference is to the community of the faithful or the community of Persons in God. With regard to the question of representation, an ambiguity remains in the fact that 'Spirit' appears to refer alternatively to God's Spirit and the human spirit.⁵⁰ German nouns are always capitalised, so the burden of the interpretation falls on the reader.

The dialectical movement in this context is thought, which becomes representation and finally self-consciousness, a movement mirrored in the three stages represented by God, who then incarnates as a human being and finally returns to the Spirit. The risen Christ is identified with the universal self-consciousness and the community.⁵¹ The particular aspect of representation lies with the imagination of the Spirit as an individual – indeed as particular, rather than universal.⁵² The divine Spirit becomes universal through the resurrection, which is a necessary moment in the Spirit's becoming self-consciousness. The

⁴⁶ See Walter Jaeschke, *Die Religionsphilosophie Hegels* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), p. 103.

⁴⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 468, §776.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 471, §780.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 472, §780.

⁵⁰ Houlgate's interpretation suggests that the Spirit comes to the fore through human consciousness and not independently. See his *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History*, 2nd ed. (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 179–80.

⁵¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 473, §781.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 475, §785.

divine being ceases to be abstract through the Incarnation and the resurrection of the Word. Once more, the substance has become subject, and actual Spirit. Hegel's approach to the Trinity tends to conflate or even confuse the three Persons of the Trinity. Moreover, this triadic dialectic finds a conceptual formulation later in his *Science of Logic*, where Hegel distinguishes three moments of his syllogistic logic, consisting of the universal, the particular and the singular. His logic is furthermore divided into logic of being, logic of essence and logic of concept – the last moment representing the pinnacle of dialectical logic.⁵³

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, all moments are necessary steps in the development of the Spirit, and therefore representation as religious thought is a necessary moment. However, it is possible to argue that representational thought is the preserve of those human beings who are unable to think conceptually:

The *mediation* of picture-thought is necessary ... For the self-consciousness that does not think in terms of the Notion, this in-itself receives the form of something that possesses immediate being and is imaginatively represented.⁵⁴

It appears that representational thought does not allow human consciousness adequate conceptual access to the divine reality, as the community cannot forsake picture-thinking or its picture-thoughts, partly because it does not identify itself with the divine itself, and thinks of its union with God as a distant beyond, something in the future. A more complete form of reconciliation with the Spirit is required, through the superseding (*Aufhebung*) of the representational mode and the passing over into conceptual thinking. This process is described in the last chapter of the *Phenomenology*, devoted to Absolute Knowing.

This last chapter recapitulates the different moments of the *Phenomenology*, stating that in religion and representation the object is still an other to the consciousness. This chapter presents the Spirit which has returned to itself as concept or notion, acting within itself and fully reconciled with itself. Spirit becomes 'pure universality of knowing'.⁵⁵ This is Spirit that knows itself as Spirit, and not as something other, or something material, and which has absolute self-certainty, whereas the content in religion is not yet 'identical with its certainty'.⁵⁶ The moment of science has finally been achieved, and both the chronological process and history are superseded. Religion contains the true content, earlier than science or absolute knowing (which obviously was unveiled in Hegel's own lifetime), but science presents the content conceptually, and only in it does the Spirit truly know itself.⁵⁷ The concept, or conceptual thinking, is the pure element of the Spirit.

⁵³ See also Hegel, *Hegel's Logic*, pp. 254–5, §191.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 475, §784, translation slightly modified.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 485, §796.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 485, §798.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 488, §802.

In the element of pure Spirit, any material, pictorial or even historical elements are left behind, and Spirit is at one with itself. This is abundantly clear in a later work, the *Science of Logic*, whose last moment, as we have seen, is precisely Concept (*Begriff*), following the first two moments of Being (*Sein*) and Essence (*Wesen*). In absolute knowing, the Spirit thinks only itself, and nothing extraneous. This point is clearly stated by Houlgate:

I do not mean to deny that Hegel regards consciousness and thought – and, indeed, philosophy itself – as mediated by history, language and culture. What I wish to dispute is the claim that absolute knowing consists essentially in the *consciousness* of such historical conditions. Absolute knowing, as the *Logic* presents it, is not a relation of consciousness to anything, but is thought thinking itself or ‘spirit thinking its own essential nature’ (WL, 1: 17; SL, 28). *Consciousness* of the intersubjective community in which we are embedded is to be found, in my view, in ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) and religion, rather than absolute knowing.⁵⁸

In many ways, religious knowledge is our knowledge, and even the self-knowledge of the Spirit. For example, Hegel stresses the need to move from the Incarnation and death of Christ to the coming over of the Spirit – a reference to Pentecost. In addition, while representation must be superseded, it constitutes a necessary moment in the development of absolute Spirit, which cannot know itself without that moment.

While the main doctrines of Christianity, namely the Trinity and the Incarnation, play a pivotal role in his conception of the Spirit and its inner workings, Hegel’s position appears to show some ambivalence, distancing himself at times from a literal or any orthodox reading of these doctrines. An ambiguity remains in his wish to proceed beyond historical revelation of Christianity to the necessity of the Spirit in itself.

One should note, however, that as far as Christian dogmatics and theology are concerned, Hegel takes a noticeably more careful, literal approach in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* than in his earlier writings, where theological themes are analysed. The early writings dismiss the dogmatic elements of the Gospels, favouring instead a focus on morality and inner piety, whereas the *Phenomenology*

⁵⁸ Stephen Houlgate, ‘Absolute Knowing Revisited’, *The Owl of Minerva* 30:1 (Fall 1998): pp. 51–67, pp. 55–6. Houlgate also claims that once absolute knowing is reached, the object no longer stands against consciousness as something alien to it: ‘Absolute Knowing, we recall, is the final form that consciousness takes in the *PhG* [*Phenomenology of Spirit*]. It is the form of consciousness that ceases to regard the real or the true as something over against it to which it stands in “relation”, and that comes to regard the true as disclosed *within* self-certainty itself. Absolute knowing is, in other words, the form of consciousness that is liberated from the “opposition of consciousness” itself and so comes to be thought, rather than consciousness itself – thought thinking itself (WL, 1: 43; SL, 49)’, *ibid.*, p. 57.

takes these dogmas seriously. It could be argued that at that early stage Hegel was influenced by both Enlightenment and Romantic attitudes towards religion, whereas later, in the process of developing his own philosophy, he becomes increasingly more confident in the role of speculative reason, eventually abandoning an underlying and all-pervasive subjectivism.⁵⁹

To recapitulate: is religion to be associated exclusively with picture-thinking or representation in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*? It must be said that while Hegel does downplay representation as a means that falls short of the Spirit which has attained complete self-consciousness and absolute knowledge – a Spirit which Hegel identifies with God – religion is the highest means of knowing absolute Spirit after philosophy.

In the later writings, the representational mode of apprehension would be compared with conceptual thinking as merely a different mode of expressing reality. The view that representation constitutes a non-speculative approach where the form does not yet truly match the content, and as such does not adequately express or reflect it, is arguably somewhat qualified by the mature Hegel.

In the *Phenomenology*, one can argue that some of the limitations of this level of knowledge lie with the religious community, rather than with religion or Christianity as a whole. In accordance with this interpretation, Hegel seeks to highlight the human limits in grasping the divine, as we fail to attain God's knowledge of himself. Interestingly, the chapter on Absolute Knowing in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* seems only a sketch compared to the full-fledged discussion of religion, in what possibly constitutes a tacit acknowledgement that human reason cannot truly grasp the divine essence.⁶⁰ However, some scholars would argue that the discussion of God's nature as thought thinking itself, as absolute knowledge independently of creation and the world, is laid out in Hegel's *Science of Logic*.

As previously noted, Hegel's academic and philosophical career spanned several decades, and his interest in religion never faltered; but, as noted by some Hegel scholars, an evolution in his religious thought is to be observed. While the young Hegel, influenced by the Enlightenment's attitude to religion, is sceptical of organised religion and particularly dogma, stressing that Jesus was above all a moral teacher, the later Hegel in Berlin takes a keen interest in Christian

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Hegel's comparisons between Socrates and Jesus, and his praise of all religious leaders, Muhammad included, for the imposition of morality on the state; G.W.F. Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), pp. 52 and 71 respectively.

⁶⁰ Hodgson notes the shortness of the chapter on Absolute Knowing, commenting that "absolute knowing" ... is more a goal than an achievement, and Hegel discusses it only briefly in the concluding chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For the most part philosophy is "on the way", not at the goal, which in religious terms could only be the beatific vision and God's self-knowing"; Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, p. 115.

theology, citing many medieval theologians and presenting his own Christology and philosophy of the Spirit.⁶¹

Some ambiguity remains regarding what he deems to be the presence of certain 'pictorial' or representational aspects within Christianity, which could be read as a metaphorical approach to essential Christian dogmas and doctrines, both in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and later in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, although this latter work appears even more willing to engage in theological discussions and to accept theological dogmas. However, this is not to say that the Christian elements are not crucially and deeply embedded in the Hegelian philosophical system. The Christian influence in Hegel's conception of dialectic is not far to seek.

On the one hand, religion plays a crucial part in the unfolding of the Spirit, and on the other, the history of religion mirrors the development of the Spirit. Furthermore, it is curious to note that, for all the focus on Hegel's conception of history as central to his system, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* views the highest level of knowing, conceptual thought, as entirely devoid of historical or chronological connotations. At the conceptual level, the historical and chronological aspects are superseded.

Note on the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences

The theme of representation, as distinguished from thinking, appears again in a work which was published before Hegel's move to Berlin, and then revised in

⁶¹ According to Kaufmann, 'Where he had previously condemned Christianity for its irrationality, he later defended its essential rationality and came to celebrate Christian dogmas as ultimate philosophic truths in religious form', Kaufmann, 'Hegel's Early Antitheological Phase', p. 18. Some scholars argue that Hegel's position regarding religion did not substantially alter over time. Houlgate argues: 'This difference between philosophy and phenomenology is, I think, reflected in the treatment of religion in the two disciplines. In his philosophy ... Hegel demonstrates that religion is absolutely necessary to the full human experience of the truth. [...] In the *Phenomenology*, by contrast, Hegel is not concerned to explain why religion must be preserved. His aim, instead, is to show how religious experience undermines the very perspective of *Vorstellung* that defines it and thereby points logically *beyond itself* to philosophy. [...] It is true, therefore, that Hegel's treatment of religion undergoes a subtle change between the *Phenomenology* and the Berlin *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. In the former, philosophy or absolute knowing does, indeed, leave religion behind, whereas in the latter philosophy affirms and justifies the religious point of view. The difference is, however, definitely *not* due to any growing conservatism on Hegel's part. It reflects the fundamental difference between the respective methods and purposes of phenomenology and philosophy [...] Phenomenology ... does not pretend to disclose the ultimate truth about religion, but contents itself with showing how and why religion makes the philosophical understanding of truth necessary. [...] One should not forget that [...] the *Phenomenology* is intended only to prepare us for, not to replace, speculative philosophy'; Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel*, pp. 104–5. I am grateful to my colleague Richard Fincham for pointing out this reference.

Berlin: the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817), in which Hegel expounds his system as a whole. This work was meant as a textbook to be used in the classroom, and its style is concise and succinct. Hegel's own lectures notes, as well as those of his students, were published alongside the main text, and are known as *Zusätze* (additions). This work comprises a first part on logic – a shorter version of the *Science of Logic* – a second part on the philosophy of nature, and a third and final part on the philosophy of mind or spirit, which includes the treatment of the human spirit and religion. Within the section on psychology and spirit/mind, Hegel treats the theoretical mind, divided into three sections, intuition, representation (in turn divided into recollection, imagination and memory) and thinking. The latter effects the unity of subject and object and rises above representation, which is still occupied with a foreign object, rather than itself. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827–1828*, Hegel expands on the difference between these three moments, recollection, imagination and memory, within representation, explaining the process in which these moments unfold:

We have to consider the representation in relation to its other, the intuition that is its immediacy. The first relation is the immediate relation of a representation to outer intuition. This is in a narrower sense a remembering; something appears before me, and I know that I have already seen it.

Second, representation is posited as relation in itself. It is my representation, and as [mine] it must be posited by me. This is the inner processing of the representation by me. The representation thus processed by me, is posited as a relation and more precisely, as totality. This is the reproductive imagination [*Einbildungskraft*]. I bring the representation into a relation that I put into them. This latter relation is the product of the productive imagination [*Phantasie*].

This representation as relation in itself, must also be brought to intuition; it must be expressed, formal immediacy must be given to this representation of mine. But this intuition is an essence given by me; it is not immediate as something that has been discovered. This is the sign, the root of language. In the word, I give my representation the capacity to be intuited. This form of immediacy is a unity of a representation and an immediacy, an intuition that I have produced.

The third is that I make this intuition itself, the totality of my representation and the intuition I have produced, into something inner. This is memory; in myself I give myself this objectivity. In word and speech, the meaning, the representation, and the intuition, the objectivity, are completely separated. [But] in memory these become one. The intelligence, in the determination that its

determination is at the same time both the content and the thing itself, is the transition to thinking.⁶²

In the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel reminds us that representation ultimately leads to thinking:

Pure thinking knows that it alone, and not feeling or representation, is capable of grasping the truth of things, and that the assertion of Epicurus that the true is what is sensed, must be pronounced a complete perversion of the nature of mind. Of course, thinking must not stop at abstract, formal thinking, for this breaks up the content of truth, but must always develop into concrete thinking, to a cognition that *comprehends* its object.⁶³

In turn, thought is divided here into understanding, judgement and reason. Hegel reiterates the position to the effect that it is at the level of thought that the concept is known and reason is truly free, without a content that is imposed from outside.

After moving from the subjective mind/spirit, where representation and thinking belong, and having treated the objective mind, Hegel places religion and philosophy within the domain of absolute mind/spirit. Philosophy represents the union of art and religion.⁶⁴ The interconnection between form and content is broached, and one particular passage points to the view that philosophy is not just a form of expressing the truth, as is religion, but is completely identified with the content itself, as the absolute form of the truth. Regarding philosophical thinking, Hegel writes:

This cognition is thus the recognition of this content and its form; it is the liberation from the one-sidedness of the forms, elevation of them into the

⁶² G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827–1828*, trans., intro. Robert R. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 214–15.

⁶³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. by William Wallace, together with the 'Zusätze' in Boumann's Text (1845), trans. A.V. Miller, foreword by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), §465, Zusatz, p. 224.

⁶⁴ Stephen Rucker writes: 'The last section of part 3 of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, "Absolute Spirit," describes the ascending stages of the consciousness of the absolute idea in art, religion and philosophy. These stages of the absolute idea parallel the stages of theoretical spirit – intuition, representation, and thought'; Stephen Rucker, *Hegel's Rational Religion: The Validity of Hegel's Argument for the Identity in Content of Absolute Religion and Absolute Philosophy* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), p. 77. Walter Jaschke argues that representation need not be limited to the sensible realm in Hegel, but in connection with religion it bears a pictorial character, in Hermann Drüe, et al., eds, *Hegels 'Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften' (1830): Ein Kommentar zum Systemgrundriß* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 375–466, 'Die geoffenbarte Religion'.

absolute form, which determines itself to content, remains identical with it, and is in that the cognition of that essential and actual necessity.⁶⁵

Some scholars, as we have seen, have questioned the feasibility, stressed by Hegel, of presenting the same content in different formats – the content could not possibly remain the selfsame if the form changes. The Berlin lectures on the various philosophical subjects further contribute to the elucidation of this problem.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, §573, p. 302.

Chapter 6

Representation and Christianity in the Berlin Lectures

From the period when Hegel was chair of Philosophy at the University of Berlin, the most prestigious such post in Germany, we have notes of his lectures on various disciplines and issues, such as aesthetics, philosophy of history and history of philosophy. Among these lectures are also the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Philosophy of religion was a discipline that had arisen during the Enlightenment period as a dispassionate, academic reflection on religion, independently of theology, which was specifically tied with Christianity. Philosophy of religion, on the other hand, also reflected on other religious traditions and compared them with Christianity. Although there had been reflections and studies on other religions before this time, philosophy of religion as an independent discipline was not taught before the late Enlightenment, and Hegel's lectures may well have contributed to its establishment as an academic discipline.¹

In the medieval period, there was no philosophy of religion as such, since this discipline implies a detached and essentially academic study of religion, whereas the medieval perspective consisted in basing any philosophical inquiry on a religious foundation. Averroes, however, in keeping with Islamic doctrine, viewed Judaism and Christianity as abrogated by Islam, the last of the three religions to be revealed. Averroes analysed other religions from the perspective of Islam; and, especially in his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, he considered that Islam offered the best conception of God and the afterlife as a means of promoting morality. Hegel, too, studies other religions in their relation to Christianity, but he claims that they have a role to play in religion as a whole and can be understood in the context of Christianity, being likewise abrogated by it.²

¹ See the introduction by W. Jaeschke in G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Religion: Der Begriff der Religion*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1993), p. xi. Oeing-Hanhoff stresses that the concept of 'philosophy of religion' makes its appearance in the eighteenth century and was unknown in the medieval period – Aquinas' theological philosophy (expounded as metaphysics) was not a philosophy of religion as such; see Ludger Oeing-Hanhoff, 'La nécessité historique du concept hégélien de Dieu', in *Hegel et la Religion*, ed. Guy Planty-Bonjour (Paris: PUF, 1982), pp. 77–99, p. 78.

² Chapelle states that, for Hegel, non-Christian religions stand to Christianity as a kind of prehistory, with the implication that they are not studied in their own right but as

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel returns to some of the themes found in his early writings and in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: that of the relation between religion and philosophy as well as their respective methods. The lectures were delivered several times, with significant modifications each time, from 1821 to 1831, the year of Hegel's death. They are divided into three parts. The first part is devoted to the concept of religion in itself. The second part treats the major world religions and the way they relate to the ultimate religion, Christianity. Finally, the third and last part of these lectures contains Hegel's interpretation of Christianity, which is significantly different from the approach he had taken as a young theologian and philosopher.

In his earlier thinking, other religions are considered as forms of the absolute Spirit, which however only reveals itself fully in Christianity. In the lectures, however, Christianity is treated in its own right, separately from the history of religion; and while the *Phenomenology of Spirit* had linked religion and art, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* treat the two separately.³

Proposing to study God and his relation with the world as Spirit which communicates itself to us in history and through religion, is a unique way of addressing the issue of religion. God is not just studied as being and as an object, which was the position of natural theology. Unlike several Enlightenment philosophers, Hegel did not shy away from studying God, although he offered a new approach in contradistinction to Scholastic and modern theology, such as that of Christian Wolff and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, much criticised by Kant and other Enlightenment figures. Hegel scholar Walter Jaeschke claims that Hegel's philosophy of religion is really a philosophical theology, in which God is the centre and the subject of the discipline in its relation to itself and to the finite. It is the Spirit that relates itself to itself and to the other.⁴

The Concept of Religion and God

At the opening of this work, Hegel states that the object of philosophy of religion coincides with that of natural theology (*theologia naturalis*), which is based on

prefiguring Christianity. See Albert Chapelle, *Hegel et la Religion*, vol. I: *La problématique* (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1963), p. 148.

³ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, pp. xxxi–xxxii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxviii. D'Hondt states that according to Hegel it is philosophy which comprehends and explains religion. The latter does not explain itself, as it operates in the domain of representation – and therefore it cannot conceptualise itself. See Jacques D'Hondt, 'La Philosophie de la Religion de Hegel', in *Hegel et la Religion*, Guy Planty-Bonjour (Paris: PUF, 1982), pp. 18–19. In addition, Jaeschke claims that Hegel's philosophy of religion is speculative theology (and replaces theology), in Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. xxiii.

what reason by itself can know about God.⁵ He also states that God is the object, not just of religion, but of philosophy, and the beginning and end of everything, including man.

In articulating the relation between philosophy and religion, he argues that ‘philosophy is theology, and preoccupation with it ... is in itself service of God [*Gottesdienst*]’.⁶ A different approach from that of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and especially that of the early writings, is at work, in the way in which not only religion but also theology (as discourse about God) is analysed, the latter being equated with philosophy. In contrast to the early writings, Hegel is no longer averse to discussing theology as dogma, or to analysing Christian dogmas as significant reference points, indeed as fundamental elements in religion and also philosophy, as will become apparent from his study of Christianity. He explicitly seeks to accommodate Christian theology within his philosophical system. Somewhat differently from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, these lectures stress that religion (as philosophical theology) and philosophy study the same subject – given that God is Spirit – and that religion, through religious representation and discourse, is not merely a stepping stone on the way to the more accurate method (the philosophical method) of comprehending reality, but the two – religion and philosophy – are two sides of the same coin. The role of philosophy of religion consists precisely in showing the congruence between the two disciplines. If so, in how do they differ? If they are identical, what are then the specific tasks of philosophy on the one hand, and religion on the other? The question of representation versus conceptual thinking resurfaces in this context.

Hegel accepts certain aspects of Scholastic philosophy, describing God as independent, free and unconditioned, a description which would not be out of place in medieval treatises on God and his attributes. For Hegel it is pivotal to stress that God can be known, that this is the goal of the Christian religion, and that we are enjoined to know God’s nature and essence either by faith or reason, authority or revelation.⁷ God’s nature is accessible both by faith and by reason, a position that goes against two currents common in the eighteenth century: the fundamentalist rationalism proclaimed by the Enlightenment, which argued that faith is irrelevant in accessing the truth, and the opposing view, common in some contemporary Protestant theology, that in order to know God and the truth one should depend on faith rather than reason. Hegel does not wish to dissociate faith and reason, religion and philosophy, as both have an epistemic value – although it remains to be seen how they relate, and finally whether Hegel makes a comparative value judgement regarding them.

The criticism of the Enlightenment’s ‘superstition’ against faith, and the pietist reluctance against reason, informs Hegel’s position in other writings from this period, in particular in his preface to Hermann Friedrich Wilhelm Hinrichs’ work

⁵ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

on the philosophy of religion, dating from 1822. Defending Hinrichs' approach to the subject, in particular with regard to the intertwining of religion and scientific knowing, Hegel argues for the harmony between faith and reason. Faith must not remain without a cognitive content and reason should not renounce its activity in relation to faith. Truth and spirit should not be only manifest in appearance and feelings.⁸ Faith cannot remain purely subjective; it must go hand in hand with reason. Moreover, it is the duty of the Church to educate human beings in the truth, which is first presented to the representation, imagination and memory, a truth which should be internalised. The dichotomy between spirit and nature presents itself to consciousness, but the idea of God imposes itself.

As well as religion, another aspect which is contrasted to the natural element in human beings is thought (*Denken*). In humans, understanding and finite reason are contrasted to his divine thinking. In his preface to Hinrichs' *Religion im innern Verhältniss zur Wissenschaft*, Hegel equally compares understanding with reason, which can grasp the infinite and eternal. Finite understanding, in spite of its limitations, helps the development of doctrine, so it has a significant role, since its content is equivalent to the eternal truth.⁹ In doing so, the understanding builds on faith, which is related to but does not exclusively rely on feeling. The religious proofs furnished by the understanding can produce faith.

This preface serves to renew the attack on the Enlightenment which proclaims God to be unknowable because, like the pietist position, it separates reason and faith. Hegel also dismisses the notion that feeling is the only true form of religion. Rather, spirit requires that what exists in feeling should be available for representation. Hegel further states that reflection (*Reflexion*) takes part in representation – that is, representation and belief, or assent (*Fürwahrhalten*), have a stake in reflection and rise above feeling.¹⁰ Philosophy is defined as the 'science of thinking reason', while religious faith is consciousness and absolute belief corresponding to reason as available for the representation.¹¹ Here reason and representation appear intertwined rather than separated.

In his critique of both the Enlightenment's formal rationalism and a subjective approach to religion which severs all ties with reason, Hegel proposes the union of faith and reason along the lines of medieval philosophers and theologians. This study of religion consists in a science of religion, which philosophy purports to be – a position also patent in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Religion needs this support from philosophy. For its part, philosophy is given its content by religion, which concerns God or Spirit. Hegel claims that this approach is found in medieval Scholasticism, where reason thinks deeply about the dogmas of revealed

⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, 'Vorrede zu Hinrichs' Religionsphilosophie [1822]', in *Berliner Schriften 1818–1831*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 43.

⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 51.

religion. Hegel's admiration for medieval Scholasticism marks a departure from the Lutheran response to this period of Church history.

Both an insistence on the exclusive use of the understanding and a mere attachment to feeling are false approaches to religion. As a finite tool, the understanding cannot truly comprehend the divine.¹² This is the task of reason, or spirit, which communicates with infinite Spirit, God. Since God is the truth, he is eminently intelligible and the subject matter of philosophy. For Hegel, Christianity is the revelation of what God is, and the Christian community is the community to which the Spirit of God is sent.¹³

According to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the goal of the philosophy of religion is to understand religion, which is a specifically human endeavour not shared with animals, for these do not show evidence of religious worship. Religion constitutes a different domain of human activity from others, namely science and law.¹⁴ Hegel warns against the misconception that relegates religion to a specific activity, stressing that it pervades all of human life. Through the idea of God, to whom we owe every gift, our minds become conformed to that higher domain of intellection.¹⁵ Religion should not be relegated to the private realm as mere piety (*Frommigkeit*). Equally, it should not be seen merely through the lens of cold reason (*Räsonnement*), which considers God simply as cause of the universe. Science, however, requires the indication of the proximate cause. Hegel concludes that religion has nothing to do with science in the purely natural sense, for science in this sense prescind from God.¹⁶ Instead, religion deals with the absolute content. This means that religion views reality as a whole and from the point of view of its origin, God, instead of researching specific, particular aspects of (material) reality and the way they relate to us. This is an abstract, partial approach that does not suit religion or philosophy of religion.

¹² Ibid., p. 64.

¹³ Ibid., p. 65. In a book review supporting Karl Friedrich Göschel's attempt to unify philosophy and religion, particularly Christianity, Hegel claims that there is no difference between Christianity and philosophical thinking, and he mentions the original unity (*Einheit*) of Christianity and speculative reason. See G.W.F. Hegel, 'Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen im Verhältnisse zur christlichen Glaubenserkenntnis: Von Karl Friedrich Göschel [1829]', in *Berliner Schriften 1818–1831*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 354. He stresses that, according to this work he is reviewing, philosophical thinking is the highest product of Christianity. Hegel criticises Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi for holding that God cannot be known (in his theory of 'unknowing'), *ibid.*, p. 358. He points to Göschel's concept that representation can reach higher than knowing. Hegel thinks less highly of representation than the author, but he praises the latter's understanding of the harmony between faith and reason.

¹⁴ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 12.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

The task of philosophy of religion is to perform a synthesis (rather than an analysis) of opposites, finding an equilibrium; it involves seeking the infinite in the finite and the finite in the infinite, reconciling feeling with cognition, and religion with intelligence.¹⁷ In saying this, as we have seen, Hegel goes against the prevailing academic current of his time, where religion and reflection are separated. In his understanding, Christian religion accommodates knowledge itself, and develops as the world of form.¹⁸ In this task of seeking to comprehend the infinite and its relation to the finite, philosophy of religion employs reason, conceptual thinking and cognition in order to grasp the absolute and omit nothing that pertains to the content.¹⁹

Unlike pagan religion, which emerges already as a reconciliation between subject and object, Christianity starts from a sundering of the human subject from the infinite, absolute being (*Wesen*).²⁰ While an absolute separation between gods and humans is absent from pagan Greek religion, where they have much in common, in Christianity the human subject finds himself face to face with an absolutely infinite and transcendent God. But a reconciliation is possible through unrestricted faith.

Hegel goes on to introduce the issue of representation into his understanding of Christianity. In order to obtain the freedom which Christian religion sets as its goal, one must acquire knowledge, and the path leading to knowledge passes through imagination or representation (*Vorstellung*). In fact, knowing (*Wissen*) starts with representation (*Vorstellung*). The obtainment of knowledge will strengthen our relationship with God, who is knowing – in a classic identification of God and thinking, already present in Aristotle with his definition of God as thought thinking itself. With respect to doctrine, which was the subject of so much criticism in the early writings, Hegel states that it offers representations and thoughts on God's nature and action. In introducing the theme of representation as associated with religion, he links it specifically with Christianity.

Hegel's personal understanding of religion is an attempt to reconcile faith and reason, which had been dissociated from each other, and to overcome their isolation from each other. In a certain way, this could be construed as a return to the medieval theme of theology as 'faith seeking understanding', in Anselm's formulation. This constitutes a reaction against the Enlightenment's banishment of religion and faith from intellectual debates, at once isolating reason from religion and depriving reason of an important source: the God of scripture on whom philosophers and theologians alike had pondered and written. This synthesis is realised by the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁹ Reardon states: 'Hegel uses the word *Begriff*, "concept", meaning literally a "gripping together" into unity of the different components of a concrete idea'; Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 33.

²⁰ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 23.

philosophy of religion, which is a new theology, and not entirely dissociated from the project of the medieval Christian philosophers and theologians.

Hegel states that philosophy of religion is a conceptual cognisance of religion. In it the absolute substantial content and the absolute form of cognisance are identical.²¹ His absolute and objective idealism – which implies that things only exist and are known insofar as they are in the mind of God or the Spirit – means that he seeks to reconcile here subject and object, as well as objective and subjective thinking.

In positing what is in the concept, and developing it, the latter is turned into idea. The concept thus becomes known in all its determinateness, which constitutes the true method towards knowledge.²²

Other religions are determinate religions, while Christianity is the absolute or consummate religion, the subject of which is the absolute idea, the Spirit or God in truth. The reasons Hegel chooses Christianity as the absolute religion are varied and complex, and the twin dogmas of the Christian Trinity – explicitly stating that God is Spirit as well as Father and Son – and the Incarnation of God, which declares that God was made man, are pivotal for understanding this choice. Christianity afforded Hegel the perfect reasons to present a consummate religion where God is Spirit and opposites can be reconciled. For instance, he draws on the doctrine of the Trinity as the locus in which God becomes object to himself and loves himself. Moreover, Hegel defends the idea that the theology of the Church rests on the view of God as Spirit. However, he departs from official Christian dogma in holding that the concept of Spirit as the relation between Father and Son is not yet a matter of conceptual thinking but rather a question of ‘representation’.²³ In the introduction to the lectures of 1824, he claims that God, the subject of religion, is unconditioned, free, boundless and the ultimate end.²⁴ This ultimate end is not isolated from us but affects the present time.²⁵

He condemned Wolff’s affirmation that philosophy was preoccupied with natural theology, which has God as subject, for this was a metaphysics of the understanding – a faculty that can discern differences and categorise but cannot reconcile extremes. For Hegel, philosophy of religion has as subject matter not only God, but religion; it studies God and ponders religion in its various dimensions. In contrast to Wolff’s philosophy, which studies being and thing

²¹ Ibid., p. 23.

²² Ibid., p. 28.

²³ Ibid., p. 43.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

²⁵ Various scholars note the differences in emphasis represented by the various lecture courses. For instance, the polemic with Friedrich Schleiermacher reaches a peak in the Lectures of 1824, and in the Lectures of 1827 Hegel is particularly concerned with rebutting any charges of pantheism levelled against his philosophy. See Dale M. Schlitt, *Divine subjectivity: Understanding Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2009), pp. 38, 269.

(*Ding*) as abstractions, Hegel's philosophy studies the absolute and the Idea.²⁶ For Hegel God is absolute Spirit which manifests itself.

God should be understood not just as object, by the understanding, but as subject and Spirit. In addition, God is studied not simply in himself but also in relation to his community. This aspect comes to the foreground in the analysis of specific religions and of Christianity, and as reflection (*Gegenbild*) of the Christian community.²⁷ The doctrine of God is the doctrine of religion, and since the object of philosophy is God, philosophy of religion and philosophy do not differ.

Philosophy, too, is knowledge of all that is eternal – what God is and what his nature is.²⁸ Philosophy shows the absolute in action, as producing itself. The relation between philosophy of religion and the other parts of philosophy consists in the idea of God being the result of the other parts of philosophy, in the same way that the Spirit issues from the sum and process of its appearances. In this sense, philosophy of religion sums up all the other philosophical sciences.

Tracing the history of philosophy and theology in order to set his own approach against the backdrop of contemporary theories of religion, Hegel states that theology consists in the study of God, the creed and dogmatics. On the other hand, the Protestant Church is characterised by a close reading of the Bible. The Enlightenment breaks new ground with the birth of rational theology, or a theology of reason which does not simply comment on doctrine.²⁹ His conception of philosophy of religion, and philosophy *tout court*, is premised on the knowability of God – a position, he stresses, which runs counter to some modern currents of theology.

The reason for this inherent possibility is not far to seek, for Hegel argues that divine reason and Spirit are not entirely different from human reason and spirit.³⁰ However, Hegel flatly rejects any claim that religion might be a human production or projection, explicitly arguing that religion is produced by the divine Spirit, and not invented by humans; it is rather the work of God within humanity. Religion is what first emerges as faith, as produced by the divine Spirit. On the other hand, this also implies faith in reason as a product of the Spirit.³¹

Hegel adds that the Catholic Church did not separate philosophy from the doctrine of the Church, for Scholasticism was the philosophy of the Church.³² He remarks that the Catholic Church fostered speculative philosophy, unlike the Protestant Church, and that the separation between the two, doctrine and philosophy, first took place in the latter. Faith and reason must be combined, and

²⁶ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 34.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

one must therefore demonstrate that reason has the right to appropriate the doctrine of religion as its proper field of enquiry.³³

In order to distinguish his approach from the Enlightenment position which prescind from scripture, he argues that in this lecture series one studies not religion in general, but positive religion, revealed by God.³⁴ In mentioning revelation, he implicitly accepts the role of the scripture in shaping religion as well as philosophy.

In denying that God can be known, through a certain kind of subjectivism, one runs the danger of falling into atheism. For God is an objective, not a subjective, reality, and he is not a particular possession of each individual. Moreover, if religion were merely feeling, there could be no philosophy of religion.³⁵

We find an interplay between finite spirit and infinite Spirit in Hegel's assertion to the effect that the characteristic of Spirit is to be for itself. In addition, representation is here related to the positivity of religion, or of a given religion. The Spirit is present in itself as object to the other, human or finite spirit, as a given, and it is other for this other. The implication here appears to be that the infinite Spirit presents itself in a manner, representative rather than conceptual, that can be grasped by the finite spirit. Positive religion, which is revealed, bears this representational aspect.³⁶

While Spirit presents itself as other to the other, it may or may not present itself as it is, as infinite, possibly because it could not thus be grasped by the finite subject of the religious representation. The representative mode must be tailored to the intellectual capabilities of the receiving subject. Moreover, the source of representation and the representative method reside in the infinite Spirit itself. In this way does God present himself to the particular, feeling subject.

Hegel lays out the three moments of his treatment of philosophy of religion. In the first instance, he discusses (1) the concept of religion in general; the concept of religion is not yet religion itself but a reflection upon it. The second moment is constituted by (2) the necessary, determinate religion; determinate religion does not yet correspond to the concept, as it is finite. In this second moment he treats religions other than Christianity, which he considers finite, whereas Christianity is the only infinite religion, and the only one which corresponds to the concept. Finally he discusses (3) religion in its infinity, the absolute, existing religion, which is the consummate religion.

In these three moments, the first constitutes the metaphysical concept; the second is the distinction between subject and object, which is the standpoint of the finite spirit in religion – infinite in itself but finite as relating to other (because they are moments in the development of the Spirit); the third is the superseding of the finite standpoint, the union of both, the cultus or worship (*Kultus*) or the concept of religion.

³³ Ibid., p. 50.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

Always keeping the relation between philosophy and religion in mind, Hegel argues that the concept of religion

taken in its speculative, absolute sense is the concept of the spirit, which is conscious of its essence, of itself. The way ... in which consciousness ... is for itself or is objective to itself is in general representation, and thus absolute consciousness is religion. It is philosophy insofar as spirit is conscious of itself not in the mode of representation but in the mode of thought. This is then the speculative concept, spirit conscious of itself.³⁷

The difference between philosophy and religion is here only the difference between the spirit's self-consciousness as thought or as representation, the two modes of apprehension being equivalent.³⁸

In keeping with Hegel's triadic dialectic (within the concept of religion), the first moment is the concept for us, which then appears as an external object, only later to become cultus. We begin with the idea, then the process unfolds whereby the realisation of the concept occurs, and finally the third moment is the identity of both.³⁹

For the Spirit to come to know itself it must go through the determinate, finite religions. The determinate religions are only stages towards this ultimate goal, but to pursue this itinerary is in the nature of the Spirit.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 55, my translation.

³⁸ With regard to the difference between religion or theology and philosophy, Patricia Carlton states: "philosophy is theology" ... However, Hegel distinguishes philosophy's method from that of theology by arguing that the philosophical study of God must be based on the necessary connections among concepts. While religion or theology may address questions about God, the proper philosophical method must be employed if we are to comprehend conceptually the eternal truth of God. The unique role of philosophy, therefore, is to develop a "scientific cognition" of this truth', in Patricia Marie Carlton, *Hegel's Metaphysics of God: The Ontological Proof as the Development of a Trinitarian Divine Ontology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 2. She furthermore states that 'this type of conceptual knowledge of God is the proper project of philosophy', *ibid.*, p. 6. Rocker stresses Hegel's affirmation to the effect that representation sometimes also rises to general thoughts; see Stephen Rocker, 'The Integral Relation of Religion and Philosophy in Hegel's Philosophy', in *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, ed. David Kolb (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 29. Moreover, Clark emphasises the close link between representation and thought: 'Thus, rather than regard *Vorstellung* as a stage simply below thought, it would perhaps be truer to see it as the "Beispiel" [example] of the Notion which is formed by each level of thought in its attempt to understand the whole in terms of itself', Malcolm Clark, *Logic and System: A Study of the Transition from "Vorstellung" to Thought in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 102.

³⁹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 56.

While criticising previous proofs of God's existence, which are prepared by the understanding and thus have only a limited scope, Hegel proposes a different path, now undertaken by reason, with regard to the determinate religions, offering to give an account of the determinateness of God as well as of the finite and its supersession, through which the representation of God will appear, taking into account in this process each specific stage of the religious consciousness. A second step involves the analysis of the particular representation or shape of a certain determinacy. Religion implies a determinacy of consciousness which is of a representational rather than a conceptual nature. The object of the religious consciousness is represented rather than conceived. When it is conceived, we find a philosophical rather than a religious consciousness. In order for Spirit to make itself representable, it has to become a subjective consciousness of something that is represented. It is assumed here that the spirit is behind the religious representation of God in each religion, as the producer of its own representation. There are two significant outcomes of this position, namely the fact that religion is not a mere product of the human mind (if we take 'spirit' here to mean 'God') and that God produces his own representation in the various religions – although Christianity is presented as the consummate religion. The third step regards the particular cultus, the church of such a religion, which unites doctrine and representation. The issue of representation is present in the various determinate religions and also in consummate religion.

In this introduction to the 1824 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel makes a point which is reminiscent of a position taken by Averroes, stating that religion is for the common, not the philosophical, consciousness. To the religious consciousness in general the Spirit is present in a sensible way, through representation, whereas it is only present as concept in philosophy.⁴⁰ Averroes had indicated that the rhetorical mode of assent, common to most people, is underpinned by a more sensible way of apprehending God.

Hegel insists that his approach to philosophy of religion is not reducible to an analysis of our own understanding as subject, of God as object, but intends to see the Spirit as it is for itself, in its process of self-fulfilment and coming to know itself. In this process, we find a theodicy, which portrays not an abstract Spirit that lies beyond our grasp, but a living Spirit which is present and at work for consciousness, appearing in order to be for itself.⁴¹

In the introduction to the lectures of 1827, where Hegel treats the relation between philosophy and religion in general, he reiterates some of the themes already introduced previously, namely God as the subject and goal of religion, and religion as something that is specific to human beings and in which they are truly free.

The relation between the two modes of knowing God, representative and conceptual, religious and philosophical, is further strengthened. They share the

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 59–60.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 60.

same object, the eternal truth – that is God – and the explication of God. Hegel goes on to claim that philosophy only explains itself in explaining religion, and in explaining itself it explains religion. In the notes, he argues that philosophy is not a wisdom of the world, but the cognisance (*Erkenntnis*) of the non-worldly: ‘not knowledge of the external mass, of empirical existence or life, but knowledge of that which is eternal, which is God, and that which flows from his nature’.⁴² Consequently, philosophy is the service of God (*Gottesdienst*, a term that is commonly used in German to describe a religious, liturgical service), as we have seen. Philosophy is thus religion and prescinds from subjective opinions in occupying itself with God.

Commenting on the contemporary separation between philosophy and religion, Hegel traces the history of a fruitful partnership between the two (not always a peaceful partnership, for he notes the condemnation of Socrates on the grounds of irreligiousness). This happy marriage was found in the Church Fathers, who in turn were influenced by Neopythagorean, Neoplatonic and Neoaristotelian philosophers. He traces the formation of Christian doctrine and dogmatics to the Church Fathers, who were philosophically trained in these traditions.⁴³ The close connection between theology and philosophy, he argues, is also found in the medieval period, when theology was philosophy and vice versa, citing Anselm and Abelard as examples of great philosophers who built their theology on a philosophical foundation.

Hegel believed that the criticism levelled at philosophy in the modern world would also undermine the content of a revealed, positive religion, whereby Christianity would be replaced by natural religion and natural theology. He stresses the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity was developed against the background of Neoplatonism and the Alexandrian school.⁴⁴

He accuses contemporary thought of treating dogma, which is true and necessary, in a purely historical way, rather than as living truth, and argues that philosophy is truer to these dogmas than is modern theology. An approach to religion which favours faith as an inner conviction over rational understanding explains this indifference to dogmatic theology. While philosophy points to an immediate certainty of God’s existence, it goes beyond this, seeking to know God conceptually as well. It is important to say not simply that God exists, but also what he is. Consequently philosophy (his own, in particular), retains more aspects of dogmatics for Hegel than does contemporary theology.

With regard to philosophy of religion and the three moments in which it unfolds, we first find the concept treated (as the main idea), then religion in its concrete existence, and finally absolute religion, Christianity. Through this process, the Spirit returns to itself. The three moments correspond to universality, particularity and singularity (within concept of religion, although they feature in the *Science*

⁴² Ibid., p. 63, my translation.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 66–7.

of *Logic*), and integrate Hegel's insistence on the reconciliation between subject and object in philosophy.⁴⁵ In this way, Hegel translates Christian themes such as the Trinity and Creation in terms of his own formulation of syllogistic logic.⁴⁶ The interrelation between God and consciousness had been mentioned. Hegel now asserts that man is conscious of God, and God as Spirit is realised in (human) consciousness. The proofs of God's existence belong to the concept of religion, but they are prepared by the understanding, not reason. Within the concept of religion, we first find a substantial unity between subject and object, man and God, under the aspect of feeling and faith. The second stage represents a split, in which we find man's relation to God, and religion as such, in the form of representation and thought. Finally a reconciliation is effected, which sublates the opposition between the subjective and God, and where we find a mystical union with God through religious worship or cultus.⁴⁷

He reiterates a point already made, especially with regard to the second moment within the concept of religion, to the effect that religion addresses every human being, while philosophy only addresses a few. In religion, all human beings have access to the truth, by appealing to the specific mental modes such as feeling, representation and thought by way of the understanding.⁴⁸ The second moment, following the concept, presents the different forms of religion as moment of the Spirit, as finite religions and shapes in the history of religion.

Specific religions are not the Christian religion, but are related to it as subordinate moments of, and contained in, Christianity. A related implication is that the consideration of these religions is necessary for reaching the final moment of Christianity. The notion of Incarnation (*Menschenwerdung*) pervades all religions.⁴⁹ Other religions offer various conceptions of God.

⁴⁵ 'The logical truth of the self-movement of the *Begriff* has three distinguishable "moments" which correspond to the "moments" of God's own actuality as Spirit: the moment of identity or universality, the moment of particularity or differentiation, and the moment of individuality as the actual or fulfilled reconciliation of the other two moments', James Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p. 98. Scholars further note the relation between Hegel's triadic logic and the Trinity, a connection which is explicitly acknowledged by Hegel; see Walter Jaeschke, *Die Religionsphilosophie Hegels* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), pp. 133–4. This parallelism – which also means a syllogistic pattern for the forms of representation, this syllogistic logic being explicit in philosophy – reflects the similarities between religious and philosophical logic, *ibid.*, pp. 134–5.

⁴⁶ For the detailed description of the syllogism of absolute religion, which includes the three moments of universality, particularity and singularity, see Claude Bruaire, *Logique et religion chrétienne dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), pp. 60–61.

⁴⁷ Schlitt argues that faith has subjective connotations, while representation is more objective; it constitutes 'the objective side, the content of this certitude (which faith is)', in Schlitt, *Divine Subjectivity*, p. 49.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 88.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105, notes.

While the treatment of the concept of religion comprises religion in itself and the understanding of God, it also touches on the remaining two parts of the philosophy of religion, the determinate and the absolute or consummate religion. As for the second part, on determinate religion, Hegel admits that he will not follow a strictly historical approach – which goes some way towards explaining the omission of Islamic religion, which does not feature in its own right within the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*.

In expounding the concept of religion, Hegel rejects the view that religion is merely useful for its practical purposes, for preserving societal units such as the family and the political state.⁵⁰ This point had already been made by Averroes in his *Decisive Treatise*, which stated that the goal of religion is not merely a sociological one, to preserve the physical existence of human beings in society. For Hegel it is Spirit that uses religion for its own purposes, and not the human mind that manipulates religion.

Finally, in the third moment of the philosophy of religion as a whole, Spirit is for itself what it is in itself, and we have the consummate religion in Christianity.⁵¹ Nothing remains hidden with regard to God. With the completion of religion its concept is attained. We find actual self-consciousness of religion in Christianity.

In the first part of the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, religion is the consciousness of God in the form of feeling, representation or thought. In contrast to the early writings, the significance of grasping God and religion is an objective goal and not just for the purpose of instilling morals in the human subject. God is a real substance and subject. Religious worship would be meaningless if subjective feeling lacked an objective basis. The subjective aspect of religion, designated ‘faith’ by Luther, is important for Hegel, but incomplete. In addition, the subjective and objective are interrelated rather than independent of each other.

Religion is consciousness of the absolutely true.⁵² Religion presents itself as speculative thought in the consciousness, but also in its object, through concrete forms of representation, which set God in relation to the religious community and its worship. In the philosophy of religion God is represented as thinking himself and determining himself. Hegel reflects on the religion of his day as a matter of inner feeling, and on the way early worship took the form of devotion. The speculative approach to religion involves the immediate relation of the I – the subject – to the divine, as a relation of finite to infinite.⁵³

At this stage, representation has an important role to play, and it is preceded by feeling, then intuition. These are modes through which our consciousness relates to the divine, as forms of religious consciousness. These forms follow in necessary sequence towards the conceptual approach to religion. Hegel explains how the content of perception, obtained from empirical experience, is internalised

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 109.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 91.

⁵² Ibid., p. 114.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 120.

as feeling and finally becomes representation. Feeling necessarily turns into representation. Religious feeling is characterised as an acknowledgement of the other, and sensibility must become representation and theory, for religion is also representation, knowing and thinking.⁵⁴

While discussing sensibility and its becoming representation in the human mind, Hegel also dwells on the seeming dichotomy between nature and Spirit as mutually exclusive. In this context, he argues that nature and Spirit reflect one another and are at bottom identical, since they have the same root, which is the Idea: ultimately, nature reverts to Spirit in a necessary movement. He refers to Spinoza's one substance in this context, as superseding the dichotomy. Nature is the idea but exists as something external, and its truth is consciousness. The highest point in nature is sensation because it includes subjectivity. The spirit animates nature. Hegel traces religious feeling from its origin in nature, or rather, our perception of nature. Nature is appearance, but it is idea for us. Nature is represented as a transfiguration of Spirit. This presentation of religion starting from the subject reminds us of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and indeed Hegel makes reference to this early work, connecting the lectures with the earlier work, and showing the necessity of the religious standpoint.⁵⁵

However, the idea of God goes beyond the mere union between finite and infinite. He is 'absolute being, the logical, universal being, substance, absolute subject'.⁵⁶ In relation to nature, God is the truth of the universe, not 'an abstract other'.

Recalling a theme that he had developed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel analyses the relation of religion to art and philosophy, where art corresponds to immediate intuition, religion to representation, and philosophy to thought. These are all different forms of conceiving the absolute truth.⁵⁷

Hegel stresses that the content of all three is identical, and these forms are not so different. In religion one also finds intuition and thought; thus, the three forms are interrelated. Religion can be seen as bridging art and philosophy, for art is one-sided without religion, that is, without representing a religious subject.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 128.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 138.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 139.

⁵⁷ As noted by various scholars, representation can be seen as a progress towards thought, pointing to thought; see Quentin Lauer, *Hegel's Concept of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), p. 10. In this sense, representation is not mere opinion, *ibid.*, p. 34 (in the same way that for Averroes dialectic rises above common opinion).

⁵⁸ Thus Yerkes states that in representing God to oneself the content comes from thought, but the form of the representation is sensuous; Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel*, p. 144. He further argues that, for all of Hegel's admiration for Scholastic philosophy and theology, it is still too closely attached to the historical and symbolic aspects of Christianity and so is not a fully speculative reflection on Christian religion, *ibid.*, p. 176. However, he

However, art comes closer to sensation, whereas religion rises above it. In that regard, art involves the limitations of the sensible. Art reproduces certain objects and is animated by the idea. Besides being limited by the circumstances of the sensible, Hegel also points out that the work of art itself is lifeless and not self-consciousness – whereas religion, in contrast, exists only in the thinking subject and self-consciousness. In addition, art depends on religion, and here Hegel clearly privileges religious art, which the *Phenomenology of Spirit* had already studied. Absolute art, he claims, cannot be dissociated from religion. Religion shows its superiority as the ‘subjective side in the element of self-consciousness, and for it representation is more essential’, representation being understood here as distinct from image (*Bild*).⁵⁹ In addition, religion encompasses and subsumes art, adding to it the notions of right and the ethical life. It has a content which is truth and worship. The representations of religion have truth as subjectivity. Religion is more universal than art in the way it portrays its object, the divine, as less tied to the particular, or the sensible. Each stage is more universal than the preceding one. As such, religion, and its mode of apprehension – representation – stand midway between art and conceptual thought, as representation stands in between sense perception and actual thought.

In addition, religion is more objective than art, and it can be taught; it has a doctrine and a specific content (while the content of art would be the object represented, which does not constitute a conceptual content as such). Religion relies not merely on feeling but on mental representation through the word, which can be imparted and has an objective value. Faith consists in the acceptance of this objective content of religion, and it requires the subject to understand this truth as one’s own.⁶⁰ Hegel claims that Luther also understood faith as distinct from sensibility, pointing to an objective content. As such, and to avoid a detrimental subjectivity, religion as representation should steer clear of mere feeling and argumentation (*Räsonnement*). Religion must also rely not merely on authority but on personal assent to a real objective content. Religious proofs rely on authority and on God’s revelation, a principle in which apologetics is grounded, but employs the authority of those to whom revelation was made. This kind of reasoning must pass over to the infinite.

Nevertheless, representation is still tied to the sensible, while philosophy employs thought instead. The shape of religion is representation rather than thought (*Denken*), and lacks the necessity of philosophy. Necessity in this context appears to mean that the shape of religion could be otherwise – the representations used could vary.⁶¹

notes Hegel’s affirmation that theology is the science of the Christian faith – a formulation similar to Aquinas’ definition of theology in the *Summa Theologica*, *ibid.*, p. 174.

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 147.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Moreover, the content is not seen as necessary, because it is immediate rather than mediated. On the one hand, representation is whole and concrete; on the other hand, its content is immediate, positive, revealed. It is the truth, although it remains external. It remains too general, such as the concept of God or Providence. Only philosophy results from the process of obtaining necessary connections – through dialectic, which is a mediating process. However, Hegel admits that the truth did not first come in the form of conceptual thought, but through representation and religion. Within philosophical thinking, one must distinguish conceptual knowledge from the understanding, which deals with finite imagery and furthermore produces dogmatics. The application of finite reasoning to the infinite and absolute (God) proves inadequate. In this context, Hegel berates Jacobi and praises Spinozism, for the former defends a reflection that goes from the finite to another finite thing, whereas the latter proceeds to the infinite from the finite. Philosophy in its proper form, conceptual knowledge, is contrary to sensibility, as it is to representation and reflection (*Reflexion*), which is a limited kind of reasoning.⁶² Having discussed the concept of religion in general, Hegel goes on to debate specific approaches to the concept of religion.

The Lectures of 1824 on the Concept of Religion

In the lectures of 1824, discussing the concept of religion, Hegel specifically distinguishes between an empirical and a speculative approach. The former involves representation – it consists in observing religion in our world – thus an external approach that does not start from the subject as such. However, God is not empirically observable; God is known as object but also through feeling as another to whom we become linked. Hegel further distinguishes between knowing (*Wissen*) and cognition. The former is immediate, resembling Jacobi's approach to faith, whereas cognition (*Erkenntnis*) is a more complete kind of knowledge, more concrete and universal. God must be seen as the highest personality, as singular within absolute universality.⁶³

Although feeling has a part to play in religion, it may involve contingency and a negative sense of subjectivity, since it can express any content. Furthermore, it is something that we share with animals. On the other hand, feeling can convey God's essentiality, as well as the sense of right and duty. However, it is the least adequate form of presenting the content. It does not present God as he truly is. Conviction is a higher form because it involves the will.

Representation marks a further level in the various approaches to the object of religion, namely God. It carries with it subjectivity as something finite in approaching the infinite. The finite reflects the infinite and they limit each other. However, the finite comes to realise that it only exists in reference to the absolute, the infinite. In fact, the finite has three moments: (1) as simple, (2) as reflection,

⁶² Ibid., p. 163.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 170.

and (3) as infinite (union of both).⁶⁴ Hegel explains that in religious, Christian, terms this is understood as God who creates the world and sets a finite being against himself. But for Hegel finite and infinite are interdependent.

The speculative approach, however, does not look at the object merely from an empirical or observational point of view. It studies the concept of religion from the point of view of the subject and consciousness, which, however, does not lack objectivity.⁶⁵ Here Hegel does not overlook the human subject, who is the subject proper of religion, but also analyses the religious phenomenon from a divine point of view. He asserts that religious experience is only obtained through God. External observation remains external to the object, hence the need for the speculative approach. In this instance, consciousness is related to truth as its object. The necessity of the religious standpoint also becomes clear in this kind of study.

This section, which lays out the speculative approach, comprises three moments: first, (1) the necessity of religion and its being determined by an external content, (2) religion as coming from an other (external content) is superseded, and (3) the determination of these forms within religion.⁶⁶

In distinguishing the external and the internal approaches, and stressing the need for a study from within (looking at the account religion gives of itself), Hegel affirms that religion comes from God and not from man, and is not a human invention. In religion, our spirit and consciousness is in contact with the absolute Spirit, and religion is a consciousness of the absolutely universal object and a relation of our spirit to the Absolute Spirit.⁶⁷ Equally, religion is self-consciousness of the absolute Spirit. The subjective spirit is not separate from the object. Religion is the highest determination of the absolute Idea. Equally, we find a mediation through the finite spirit, whereby the absolute Spirit posits itself as finite spirit, such that the finite consciousness becomes a moment of the absolute Spirit. Moreover, God becomes finite through man, and religion is the knowledge divine Spirit has of itself through the mediation of the finite spirit.

In stressing the need to understand God from within, Hegel's criticism of the proofs of God's existence becomes apparent – in religion one starts from the absolute Spirit, not from the finite spirit, and not from proofs provided by the latter. The starting point, rather, is God, since the determinations must come from the concept itself or reality.

What is the role of philosophy in the process of disclosing the nature of God to us and our relationship with him? Philosophy bears the methodical proof that the content is true. It shows us, in a conceptual or intelligible way, the nature of God from his own perspective in its truth.⁶⁸ This role of philosophy or philosophy of religion takes the place of theology in previous discourse about God. Rather

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 211.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 216.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 220.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 221.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 221.

than having a theology, Hegel has a philosophy of religion which is equated with philosophy itself. It shows us God's activity within himself. Philosophy provides an account of religion with the appearance of the Idea, of God, to us and to the world.

In accordance with Hegel's dialectic, this process is to be understood in three moments. In a first instance, the idea is a self-identical affirmation; secondly, we find a differentiation within the idea, being for one and for another, and the appearance of God; and finally the difference is integrated within the absolute affirmation.⁶⁹

These first two aspects can be combined to some extent. The differentiation and being for other (for the subject as an object) is essential, and contains the moment of representation, the representation of God. This is understood as appearance, for himself and for us. In a first instance, God is Spirit and is for us, and the reality equals the idea. The second moment leads to the reconciliation of the difference through worship and the religious community, and represents the practical side.

Within the first moment Hegel mentions other religions, which also consider the idea of God, although they fail to represent him as he truly is; they fall short of the authentic religion – a place reserved for Christianity, which understands God as Spirit in its absolute content.⁷⁰ While discussing the various religions and their concept of God, Hegel offers some reflections on the difference between philosophy and religion, the latter going hand in hand with representation (or 'picture-thinking'): religion appears in many forms, which include positive religion(s). Positivity in religion signifies that the content is imposed on the subject externally, usually through scripture, a text which is considered authoritative and from which dogma is elicited. In this sense, philosophy is at odds with religion as positive religion, since the tendency for dogma and reification involves the use of the finite understanding and goes over and above simple faith. Here the spirit has gone out of religion, as a result of the stress on a particular form. Enlightenment took it upon itself to critique these forms. Hegel goes on to say:

It is the distinctive task of philosophy to transmute the *content* that is in the representation of religion into the *form* of thought; the content [itself] cannot be distinguished. Religion is the self-consciousness of absolute spirit: there are not two kinds of self-consciousness – not both a conceptualizing self-consciousness and a representing self-consciousness, which could be distinguished according to their content. There can only be a diversity in form, or a distinction between *representation* and *thought*, and we can presuppose a more detailed acquaintance with that.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 228.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 234.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 235, English translation in G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, ed. Peter. C. Hodgson, trans.

Representation has the form of externality and relies on sensation; it stands midway between sense perception and thought. It is no longer pure sensation because it has internalised sensation. What Hegel means here is that the imagery associated with religion is still linked to the sensible and sensibility, in particular the sense of sight. Proof of this sensibility is the figurative expressions used in religion. In Christianity, specifically, the usage of terms such as ‘father’ and ‘son’ indicate the remnants of sensibility. Representation is the result of an internalisation of sense data, which are subsequently translated into figurative expressions and analogies. The notions of father and son as applied to God derive from the ‘natural living state’, from the physical relation between father and son that we observe in nature, while the concept of ‘creation’ loosely describes the relation of God to the world. In addition, the chronological sequence insisted upon in religion (the history of religious events succeeding in chronological order) goes against the logic and necessity of the conceptual form. History and time stand opposite to the logical and necessary. In a passage from the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, which will be analysed below, Hegel explicitly opposes philosophy and history:

Philosophy is the science of necessary thoughts, of their essential connection and system, the knowledge of what is true, hence eternal and everlasting. In contrast, history in the usual view deals with what has taken place, thus with something contingent, transitory, and past.⁷²

Thus it is necessary to study history, and the history of philosophy, in a philosophical perspective in order to discover in it the guiding principle(s).

In these passages from the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel sums up his understanding of the relation of philosophy and religion, respectively based on concept and representation. The content remains identical, but the form of presentation differs. Indeed, it could be said that philosophy does not have a form as such, but presents the content as it is, whereas religion uses figurative language, based on everyday language, such as the concept of family relations. Hegel also mentions the different approaches to religion – theological, pietist, sentimental – as a sign that religion does not present the content in the most perfect way. Religion is closer to sensibility than is philosophy, a point already made by Averroes. The connection between religion and historical narrative also detracts from a perfect expression of the true content.⁷³

R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart with the assistance of H. S. Harris (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), p. 333.

⁷² G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–1826*, vol. I, *Introduction and Oriental Philosophy*, together with the Introductions from the other Series of these Lectures, ed. Robert F. Brown, trans. R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart with the assistance of H. S. Harris (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), p. 167.

⁷³ According to Jaeschke, the realm of representation is spatiality, temporality, accidentality, and, generally speaking, particularity and finitude. It has a given content,

However, there is a conceptual way of reading history, which looks at the logical necessity of the events as they unfold. It is this logical or speculative approach which permits us to see Christianity as the culmination of religious tradition or thought, and, in a parallel way, Hegel's own philosophy as the culmination of the history of philosophical thought, by his own admission. Summing up this first point, and before proceeding to the second point, which pertains to the practical aspect of religion and specifically worship, Hegel states that within the first point God is seen in representation and this corresponds to the true idea of God. The representation of God is the being of God.

Hegel proceeds to the second aspect, worship, which is grounded in faith, defined as an inner testimony of the spirit which links us to the absolute Spirit. While stating that faith cannot be solely based on miracles, Hegel argues that his account of religion accords faithfully with the Christian faith, and is a philosophical translation of Christian faith and theology. At this point he wards off charges of pantheism, arguing that his union of the finite spirit with the infinite Spirit is seen as a communication between the finite and the infinite, based on the notion that man is made in God's image. He adds that his account of absolute Spirit corresponds to the Person of the Holy Spirit, who is God. He acknowledges that his appreciation

occurring in time, which is not immediately or physically present, unlike in intuition (*Anschauung*), but is a recalled content, thus containing an element of memory. A representation is something produced, or rather, reproduced. Jaeschke, *Die Religionsphilosophie Hegels*, p. 114. Representation constitutes just one aspect of religion, *ibid.*, p. 115; it stands between intuition and conceptual thinking, p. 116, and is also closely connected with feeling (*Gefühl*), p. 117. Jaeschke asks how the content can possibly remain the same, absolute and infinite, if presented in disparate forms (such as art and religion, as well as philosophy). The answer is to be found in Christianity, the highest form of religion, and the passage to philosophy, *ibid.*, pp. 118–19. For the connection between representation and memory, see also Chapelle, *Hegel et la Religion*, vol. 1, p. 119. Hodgson highlights the richness of the concept of representation: 'In the philosophy of religion lectures the discussion of language occurs principally as an analysis of forms of the knowledge of God: immediate knowledge, feeling, representation, thought. We have seen that for Hegel representation (*Vorstellung*) is not merely an epistemological but an ontological category, pointing to a divine action, God's setting-forth of godself in the spatiotemporal world. God is both the subject and the object of representation. Epistemologically speaking, representation has two forms, sensible and nonsensible. Sensible representation expresses its contents in the form of historical narratives, either mythical or factual. In narrative, elements exist alongside each other as independent entities, linked by conjunctions. Representation is not yet able to hold its disparate elements together in the form of a conceptual grasp of relations. The latter is the task of thought (*Denken*), which is the highest form of language in its ideality and synchronicity. Nonetheless, it draws upon materials furnished by representation, and if it cuts itself off from them it loses contact with life experience and takes on the character of formal logic or mathematics. Hegel might have been more explicit about this dependence of thought on representation. But it is clear that an aspect of narrative is always present in thought, especially in religious thought'; Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 273–4.

of theology, which seeks to understand faith in a rational way, brings him closer to Catholic theology than to Protestant theology – and cites Meister Eckhart in support of his view of the interrelation of God and man.⁷⁴ This reconciliation is achieved through worship, which comprises every aspect of human life. It implies giving up subjectivity and particularity.

The Lectures of 1827 on the Concept of Religion

These lectures offer an approach to the concept of religion similar to the lectures of 1824, and they deal more specifically with the three moments – concept of God in itself, our knowledge of God and finally the cultus. Within the knowledge of God, Hegel states that revelation is an integral part of Christian religion, and he berates contemporary theology for speaking of religion rather than God, unlike medieval theological practice.

We first conceive of God through representation, then as thought. Representation can depict a fictitious content, whereas thought depicts God as he is; it is not a merely subjective conception. Thought brings about certainty.⁷⁵ However, representation is more objective than faith. Certainty of belief differs from that of knowledge and is only a first stage towards knowledge. The agent of faith is not an external fact or factor, such as miracles or historical confirmation, but the testimony of the Spirit itself. At the same time, this faith cannot rely on feeling alone, but must become more objective and universal. Representation offers a more objective expression of the content than feeling, but it must progress towards thought/concept. The content of representation and concept is the same regarding the world spirit.

The characteristic of representation is that it entails images and sensible forms which point to a more conceptual content. These images are to be taken allegorically as symbols. Hegel cites the relation of Father begetting the Son in religion as this kind of allegory – the allegorical aspect of which could be taken to mean that this is not a physical begetting. The image stands for the real content but must be distinguished from it, as an allegory.

For representation – it must be stressed that this term is taken in a subjective sense, as the act of representing to oneself, and objectively, as the image represented in the mind – history comes as appearance. Representation also has a close link with history, and a time sequence, as Hegel had already mentioned, but in a specific way, as narrative. The content of religion presents itself in a sensible way especially to ordinary consciousness, that is to say, to ordinary people, who are not philosophers. This sensible picturing involves events that take place in a sequence, at a specific time and successively.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 248.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

God, the Spirit, and creation can also be seen as representations, although they originally proceed from thought. Representation also has non-sensible forms. Religion contains both feeling and representation, but representation is the first objective form of the content. For its part, representation does not attain to the unity itself but contains an element of contingency, and cannot bridge the gap between God and the world.

With regard to thought, Hegel states that it is more universal than representation. However, the common consciousness adheres to representation. Thought requires mediation and necessity, a logical process – in short, Hegel's dialectic logic. This involves a process of unfolding causation, from cause to effect, where the effect is subsumed in the cause and cannot exist without the causal process. Mediation in religious knowledge takes the forms of teaching, education and revelation. Here Hegel accepts that doctrine (*Lehre*) and revelation are essential. Even faith and belief/conviction are mediated, rather than immediate.⁷⁷

In a renewed criticism of the proofs of God's existence, he claims that in them the finite spirit gives testimony to the infinite Spirit, an inadequate process, since the latter should testify for itself. At any rate, the truth of the finite is always the infinite.

With regard to the third moment, worship, Hegel states that it produces the reconciliation of man to God, and it is an essential aspect of religion which cannot be neglected. In this context, it must be said that the sacraments are an important part of worship. Philosophy itself, in studying the absolute Spirit as object, is a perpetual worship.⁷⁸ A religion can be imposed by state authorities, but Hegel claims that this flies in the face of the free nature of personal faith and belief.

In the excerpts of the lectures of 1831 (taken by student David Friedrich Strauss), the year of Hegel's death, three stages are delineated within religion: feeling, representation and finally faith. Within representation, we do not yet possess the truth of the content. Representation includes the figurative, which implies a difference between the mode of representation and the object represented, calling for the explanation of allegorical meaning. It also includes the indeterminate and simple, which is not yet fully grasped. Finally, it includes the historical aspect, as actual happenings and sequences of events.

The Determinate Religion

What is the role of representation in the second part of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, devoted to determinate religions? The sequence of religions presented leads to Christianity. These religions include pagan religions such as ancient Greek religion, Judaism, and the oriental religions of China, India

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 306–7. However, representational thinking fails to make full use of dialectic, Hegel's own conception of logic, and specifically to grasp the object in its dialectical unity. See Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel*, p. 81.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 334.

and Persia, for which Hegel had researched the latest sources in scholarship.⁷⁹ As Jaeschke rightly points out, Hegel's goal is not primarily to produce a history of religions; in fact, the chronological relation of other religions to Christianity is unimportant.⁸⁰ His goal is rather to trace the role of the Spirit in historical religions, as forms of the Spirit. Within determinate religion, he examines the being, essence and concept of God. The treatment of world religions by Hegel is not exhaustive, and Islam is omitted or at least not treated in its own right.

Having treated the religion of beauty, which is Greek religion, Hegel discovers that the underlying principles in Judaism – the religion of the sublime (*Erhabenheit*) – underlie Islam as well, namely, obedience as a fundamental principle, together with unfreedom, and the concept of God as one and abstract.⁸¹ In these religions – as he will say later – God is not Spirit, in contrast to Christianity, which is characterised by the dogma of the Trinity and where freedom is found. In Judaism, people are considered servants, and Islam is characterised by fanaticism, dependence and servitude along with strong ties to family and society.⁸² Islam, however, is addressed to everyone and does not seek to convert just one people. Fanaticism is also characteristic of Judaism, but only when religion is attacked, and its goal is particular, unlike in Islam.⁸³ Islam does not entail the kind of nationalism found in Judaism, and the only distinction made is that between believers and non-believers.⁸⁴ He sees in Islamic doctrine the fear of God as the cornerstone, and the veneration of God as one as foundational, and he deems this to be a formal abstraction.⁸⁵

He judges that Judaism does not envisage immortality or reconciliation, and conceives realisation to be found only in the here and now; only a temporal advantage is to be obtained by believers. As for Greek religion, he finds a union of the spiritual and the natural, with beauty at the centre of worship. Greek religion is also characterised by the absence of dogma; for the Greeks the immortality of the soul is no dogma as such. This absence of dogma is also a characteristic of Roman religion, the religion of expediency (*Zweckmässigkeit*, which can also be translated as 'usefulness'), which sees a decline in true religiosity. Here the representation of the divine being is clearly not for thought but for representation

⁷⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 2, *Die bestimmte Religion*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994), p. xxi.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

⁸¹ See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 431, for Hegel's association of the 'abstract' with Islam.

⁸² Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 2, pp. 62–4.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 577, notes.

⁸⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, *Die vollendete Religion*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1984), p. 149.

alone. The natural element suits the sensible and the external intuition, and the human form is present and is an essential part of religion.

More generally, while dependency characterises the oriental religions, freedom is found in the ancient Greek religion.⁸⁶ On the whole, the various religions are moments of the spirit.⁸⁷

In the lectures of 1824 on the determinate religions, he offers a threefold division, in which the first instance is natural or nature religion, followed by a religion in which subjectivity plays an important role, including Judaism and Greek religion, and finally the ancient Roman religion of expediency. In the nature religions, Hegel incorporates the oriental religions. The second moment of determinate religion embodies the religion of the spirit for itself, such as the Greek and the Jewish religions. Finally, the Roman religion is the religion of the external goal.⁸⁸ In the nature religion (different from the Enlightenment's rational religion) a unity is observable between nature and spirit, and nature is worshipped as something spiritual and for its divine powers.⁸⁹ Here the representation of the divine is still abstract rather than concrete. Within nature religion, one can distinguish the metaphysical concept, the form or representation of God, and the cultus. In nature religion, the infinite is present in the finite, God is present in nature.⁹⁰ Among the different nature religions, one finds the religion of magic, which is not particularly spiritual, and is in fact not yet religion on that account. The religion of fantasy (Hinduism) is the second form of nature religion, and in the passage from nature religion to spiritual religion we find the religion of the enigma (*Rätsel*), corresponding to ancient Egyptian religion.

In his analysis of determinate religions, Hegel often draws comparisons with Christianity, which he sees as the culmination of a long process of development of religious forms, each represented by a different religion. Thus, for instance, in Greek religion the humanity of the gods is obvious, but not the principle of God made man as such. While the Roman religion of expediency addresses all and seeks the adherence of all peoples, together with the expansion of the empire, it does not present an inner necessity, and its universality is not spiritual, unlike the Christian and Islamic religions.⁹¹ The beginning of the process whereby Spirit is for Spirit heralds the passage to Christian religion.

⁸⁶ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 2, p. 115.

⁸⁷ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, p. 91.

⁸⁸ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 2, p. 142.

⁸⁹ 'Natural religion, or rather the religion of nature, he [Hegel] defines as in essence the unity of the spiritual and the natural. It is not to be confused however with what in his day was usually designated by the term; the "natural religion" of the Enlightenment thinkers he rejects as a figment of the "philosophical" imagination', Reardon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 39.

⁹⁰ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 2, p. 159.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

In the Lectures of 1827, Hegel again stresses that the various determinate religions are moments of the (self-development of the) concept. Christianity is the culmination of the process involving the series of the various religions. In this lecture series he includes reflections on Taoism and Buddhism, using the latest research by European scholars on the other (i.e., non-Christian) religions. He notes the dualism (between finite and infinite) which characterises Oriental religions, such as Manicheism.⁹² With regard to Egyptian religion, he remarks that it is the first one to defend the immortality of the soul. Ancient Egyptian religion represents a higher level of spirituality, in that it makes way for subjectivity in the form of representation (i.e., the notion of gods in the shape of humans), in which the human being is not represented immediately or simply objectively, but as transformed by subjectivity and representation.⁹³

Hegel explains why representation entails a higher level of spirituality, holding that it contains an aspect of universality (rather than particularity). Representation works at different levels, and has an element of thought. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, representation at the highest level (within the chapter on religion) is subsumed under Spirit, as is philosophy.⁹⁴

The Consummate Religion

The consummate (or complete) religion, constituting the third part of the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, contains Hegel's views on Christianity and its place in his philosophical system. The title given to this final section of the lectures indicates Hegel's great esteem for Christianity, which represents the highest form of religion, and the form in which the Spirit knows itself as such. Moreover, Christianity does not have the incompleteness of other religions, hence it is the consummate (*vollendete*) religion.

Hegel's most explicit treatment of representation is found in the concept of religion, his introduction to the theory of religion in these lectures. Representation does not feature as prominently in the second part of the lectures as it does in the

⁹² Ibid., p. 507.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 522.

⁹⁴ As pointed out by Stephen Rucker, these are various levels of representation (with the implicit affirmation of Christianity as containing the highest form of religious representation): 'We need to be clear that all religious representations are not on one level and that doctrinal expressions of religion's content more closely approach pure thought as they manifest the effort to give rational expression to what is, or should be, believed. Nonetheless doctrine as religiously expressed retains some degree of externality, and the connection of the elements is not completely demonstrated. Yet, even here as Hegel notes, we find "within religion philosophies directly expressed"'; Rucker, 'The Integral Relation of Religion and Philosophy in Hegel's Philosophy', p. 30.

first part. We shall now examine his references to representation in the context of Christianity.

Hegel's manuscript describes Christianity as the most sublime (*erhabenste*) religion.⁹⁵ It shows the manifestation of God in spiritual self-consciousness. In this sense, the Christian religion is the religion of revelation.⁹⁶ In it God reveals himself to humanity, which is possible first because man was made in God's image, as proclaimed in Genesis, and, secondly, because God became incarnate and made himself man, as revealed in the New Testament. These appear to be necessary conditions for a true communication between human beings and God. In other religions, God is other than his manifestation, but not so in Christianity, which is the religion of truth.⁹⁷ In Christianity, God appears as Spirit and as truth, in and for itself. As Hegel had mentioned before, the proofs of God's existence are an inadequate way of talking about God or even for understanding his existence, because they proceed from the finite to the infinite (in the sense that man seeks to prove God's existence, rather than seeing God manifesting himself to humans), whereas we should try to see God, insofar as possible, as he sees himself; in other words, we should start from the concept.

In this context, Hegel contrasts subjectivity and representation with being and objectivity. Representation signifies appearance to the subject in this context, which need not have negative connotations. It can be something positive, for it implies existence for the consciousness and for the spirit. In a sense, 'the concept seems to dispense with being in the same way that the soul dispenses with the body'.⁹⁸ Even so, one must proceed from the concept to being, as in Anselm's proof, in which the concept of God is proof of his existence: the concept not lacking any perfection and thus not lacking existence. Representation bears, in this passage of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, a more general meaning, signifying that which the mind pictures to itself, without a contrast to concept or conceptual thinking.⁹⁹ In fact, representation is here equated with general content as opposed to that which is limited and particular.

Among the ways of representing God, and after mentioning the Trinity, Hegel also refers to certain 'naive' forms of representation in a Christian religious context. These forms of representation are 'Son, begetting', a clear reference to Christian theology and the Nicene Creed, which describes the mode of procession amongst the Persons of the Trinity. In these lectures, Hegel offers a metaphorical reading of Christian dogma. It is in this context that the discussion of 'representation' takes place in the treatment of the consummate form of religion, Christianity. In addition, this religion represents for Hegel the full revelation of God. The fact that certain aspects of Christianity, such as the Trinity, had featured in previous

⁹⁵ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, p. 1, notes.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8, my translation.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

religions, albeit in an incomplete form, in no way detracts from the intrinsic truth of the Trinity in Christianity – it is still a divine revelation rather than a human construction. Any previous religious forms that were later found in the Christian religion did not represent an absolute consciousness of the truth.¹⁰⁰ He proceeds to a philosophical analysis of the Trinity and its moral and spiritual implications. God in himself is infinite power. Jesus is the Logos, that which manifests God; he is wisdom and the paradigm for human beings. Finally, Spirit represents totality.

Hegel also stresses the interweaving between religious and philosophical ideas, in particular in the intersection between Christianity and Neoplatonism, as well as Gnosticism in Late Antiquity. He alludes to the existence of ‘philosophical representations’ that were used from the time of Christ, and the way some of them constituted philosophical systems, such as that of Philo of Alexandria and other Alexandrian thinkers of Antiquity. This process involves a mixture of the Christian religion with philosophical representations, with an admixture of figurative and allegorical notions. He also claims that heresies rise from speculations on the procession of that which is other from the One. It is interesting to find the use of ‘representation’ applied to philosophy. The term could point at this passage to a departure from Christian dogma as established by the Church councils. On the other hand, it could mean a more fluid boundary between representation and conceptual thinking, since the latter can also imply thought, and be closer to, or further from, sensibility.

The second representation refers to Creation, and the world of finitude, after the first representational sphere of God as Spirit, corresponding to the idea of God. Hegel argues that representation sees these two spheres (God and Creation) as quite separate, while they are at bottom one from the conceptual point of view.¹⁰¹ The world is seen as the region of contradiction, for instance between form and matter, but some of these oppositions are produced by the understanding.¹⁰² The third sphere is objectivity as finite spirit and, with redemption and reconciliation, the completion or perfection (*Vollendung* also meaning consummation) of the Spirit. The divine Idea should be realised in finite (human) self-consciousness.

Reverting to the concept of representation, Hegel distinguishes here representation from concept or conceptual thinking. Something that is understood conceptually is represented as different states (in time or place) of existence, in a discrete form. As an illustration he refers to the principle of man’s being made in God’s image – what this truly means is man’s spiritual vocation. When speaking of ‘representation’ in the context of Christianity, Hegel links it with a literal, materialistic or anthropomorphic reading of what he deems to be metaphors present in scripture (a position which resembles Averroes’ theory of metaphorical interpretation of the Qur’an if it depicts God in any corporeal way). In this particular case, our being made in God’s image means that we share in

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 22–4.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 26.

God's own intelligent and intelligible nature. Hegel believes that the speculative content cannot be conveyed in images or representations – speculative meaning conceptual in this context. Equally, the Fall of the first man is interpreted by him metaphorically to mean that we become less similar to God, namely in becoming mortal – although knowledge of good and evil is an intrinsic aspect of the spirit.¹⁰³ He presents us with a philosophical explanation of the doctrine of original sin, and man's evil nature, in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*:

The Christian doctrine that man is by nature evil is superior to the other according to which he is good. Interpreted philosophically, this doctrine should be understood as follows. As spirit, man is a free being [*Wesen*] who is in a position not to let himself be determined by natural drives. When he exists in an immediate and uncivilized [*ungebildeten*] condition he is therefore in a situation in which he ought not to be, and from which he must liberate himself. This is the meaning of the doctrine of original sin, without which Christianity would not be the religion of freedom.¹⁰⁴

Certain central biblical dogmas, however, are not to be taken metaphorically, but as historical facts, namely the Incarnation. For Hegel Jesus is not merely a divine teacher or a moral instructor, or even a philosopher. We possess an intuitive and immediate certainty of his divinity, which is not a matter of representation or persuasion.¹⁰⁵ The consummation of reality in a single individual is the most beautiful aspect of Christianity, by Hegel's admission.

Other aspects of Christian teaching are analysed as they speak to the representation and speculative thinking, such as the meaning of the kingdom of God. This 'metaphor' could signify God's own inner life but it is also closely related to Jesus, who embodies the kingdom of God. The representational aspect appears to point to the fact of the Incarnation, but not because Hegel would deny this dogma – God having become man. Instead, this is the way God reveals himself and his kingdom to human beings, by making himself closer to them through the Incarnation. God makes himself such as to be able to be grasped by human beings.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁰⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 51, §18, Addition H. According to Reardon, 'when the Bible speaks of the "wrath" of God, or of his "vengeance" or "repentance" we at once realize that such terms are not to be taken in their primary meaning but merely as suggestive of a resemblance or "likeness"', Reardon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁵ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, p. 47. Reardon states: 'The gospel accounts of Jesus are not presented merely as a myth or allegory but as a genuine record of actual occurrences, even though it is the divine signification and not the bare happenings which furnish the inward and "rational" element in his history', Reardon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 34.

The three spheres here consider God first as thinking Spirit, secondly as his realisation in nature (Creation) and finally as his realisation in a finite spirit, which then returns to the eternal idea.¹⁰⁶ Representation in these passages comes down to the sensible and sensible imagining.

The manifestation of God, as Hegel states, is present in thinking, representation and actuality. All these aspects are united in the figure of Jesus, who stands between God the Father, as the pure concept of God, and the Spirit, which represents the divine object becoming immanent.¹⁰⁷

Representation also has a privileged link to faith. The substantial nature of Spirit can be grasped through conceptual thinking, but in the community of believers this is not the case – the community is conscious of the Spirit through faith. When Spirit reveals itself for the spiritual consciousness as a whole it is called faith. This does not require recourse to authority or reasoning, which for Hegel can be contingent and accidental. The grounds for faith are the Spirit itself. He states that ‘the faith ... of the community rests solely on reason itself, on the Spirit’.¹⁰⁸

Since religion must rest on Spirit, an external element (such as authority) is not sufficient to bring about faith; this must be achieved by inner persuasion. Neither a merely rationalistic approach nor a subjectivist approach can be adequate. Spirit transcends this dichotomy between subject and object. According to Hegel, this can only be achieved through thought, that is, in philosophy: ‘Thinking is the only sphere in which everything extraneous vanishes and spirit is absolutely free, is present to itself. The interest of thinking, of philosophy, lies in reaching this goal’.¹⁰⁹

The Lectures of 1824 on the Consummate Religion

The lectures of 1824 highlight the notion of Christianity as the consummate religion.¹¹⁰ Hegel stresses again that religion represents the relation of Spirit to spirit, and the communication between divine Spirit and human spirit. He rejects the subjectivist notion that we cannot know God or the object in itself.

Representation appears especially linked to the Incarnation of God, who in this process becomes something particular and conceivable by the human consciousness/spirit.¹¹¹ Here he also analyses the three moments of the consummate religion, Christianity, as corresponding to the three Persons of the Trinity, not as

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 68–9.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 77–8.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 85. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 3, *The Consummate Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R.F. Brown, P.C. Hodgson and J.M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 150.

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–1826*, vol. I, p. 215.

¹¹⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 24.

¹¹¹ An echo from medieval Christian theology may be discerned here. According to Aquinas, ‘just as the Blessed Virgin conceived Christ in her body, so every pious soul conceives Him spiritually’; St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, complete English

they proceed from the Father, or in their internal timeless procession, but as they reveal themselves to humanity. These moments consist in, first, the Father, who is revealed to the Jewish people as announced in the Old Testament; secondly the Son, whose life is narrated in the Gospels; and finally, the Holy Spirit, sent by the Son after his ascension into Heaven, as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles, which are part of the New Testament. It is philosophy, in particular philosophy of religion, which conceptualises and reflects upon these moments in a concrete way.

The tripartition into these three moments, found in the third part of the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, is thus described by Hegel: spirit is considered in three forms or elements. The first is eternal being, which is in the form of universality, and is being for itself. Secondly comes the form or appearance, or particularisation, being for others.¹¹² Finally, we have the form of return to itself from appearance, which is the form of absolute singularity. The second form is specifically associated with representation, while the first is simply thought, and the third is the form of subjectivity. In this process, which Hegel calls divine history, the Spirit differentiates itself, separates itself and returns to itself. In terms of location, the first form is outside space, the second is seen in the world, and the third in the Christian community. This explication by Hegel is another example of his philosophical interpretation of theological dogmas, his conceptualisation of the Christian Trinity.¹¹³ The tripartition into universal, particular and singular is already present, as we have seen, in his *Science of Logic*. The same idea is available conceptually and for representation; indeed, the idea of God must be universally accessible also to the representational mind.¹¹⁴

The second moment, heralding the coming of Christ, is studied in conjunction with his teachings. Hegel notes something which could resemble points he had already made in his early theological writings, to the effect that the teachings of Christ cannot be equated with what went on to become the doctrine of the Church. However, in this later context, this does not mean that the doctrine of the Church is at variance with the teachings of Christ, but that it came to be conveyed in a different way from the one in which Christ presented his teachings. A more detailed note dating from 1831 states that these teachings are meant to arouse sensibility, through representation, reaching the mind as intuition. They were only

edition in five volumes, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948), vol. 4, Part III, Q. 30, First Article, Obj. 3, p. 2173.

¹¹² Jaeschke remarks that within the treatment of Christianity, Christology features as the third moment in Hegel's *Encyclopaedia* [§569] (as singularity) whereas in the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* it constitutes the second moment (as particularity): Walter Jaeschke, *Die Religionsphilosophie Hegels*, pp. 93–4. The trinitarian structure of the exposition of absolute religion is only introduced in the *Lectures*, not before, *ibid.*, p. 95.

¹¹³ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, pp. 120–21.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

formulated as doctrine (conceptually and scientifically) at a later stage, according to the needs of the Church.¹¹⁵

When the Spirit is given to the community, the representational mode turns into a spiritual one, although the representational mode can always be recalled and employed again. Representational apprehension derives from the sensible and the use of imagery, although it can rise above it. This process becomes particularly obvious with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The sensible presence of the divine manifests itself in holy images, pictures and relics, which function as mediation between the human community and God. For the spiritual community the immediate presence has vanished, but it has already been incorporated into it, and is to return with Christ's second coming.¹¹⁶

In his endeavour to stress that the Spirit then resides in the community, Hegel states that some forms of the religion – in this case Christianity – do not advance beyond the second stage, which is the representation of the Son and those who surrounded him. He mentions Catholicism as a case in point, where Mary, the Mother of God, is venerated and the saints are exalted. He does not deny that the Spirit is recognised as such, but states that it is considered in Catholicism to reside in the Church and its decrees rather than its faithful. The second moment is thus highlighted, and with it its sensible form which addresses sensible imagination to the detriment of the third moment, of the Spirit; thus the second moment is not spiritualised.¹¹⁷ Hegel adds that Mary and the saints become part of the reconciling power of God in Catholicism, a clear reference to the views on intercession in the Catholic Church. Moreover, the Spirit is considered to dwell in the Church hierarchy rather than in the community.

Having described the Spirit as the union of the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity, he goes on to highlight modern challenges to the Church, based on an abstract conception of God, that is antithetical to the Christian Church. This abstract thinking can take on two forms. One of them is the Enlightenment, with its general conception of God which does not take into account the Trinity and the concrete God of the Bible. This view carries with it a certain subjectivism allied with the conclusion that God cannot be known as he is.

The other challenge is Islam, which Hegel discusses here in the longest passage devoted to Islam in the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*. In Islam, and contrary to the Enlightenment position, the subject only exists for the One and gives itself up. Its content resembles that of Judaism, but any particularity is abolished, including the specificity of being addressed to a particular nation, one of the hallmarks of Judaism. Islam is the antithesis of Christianity in its abstract conception of God. It shares with Christianity only the fact of being addressed to all peoples. Everyone is the same in the sight of God, and although slavery is contemplated, all class distinctions are abolished. Hegel contrasts Islam to the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 240–41.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 153.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 161–2.

spirituality of Christianity, which is concretely grounded in the Trinity and its historical revelation, a revelation that occurs in history, a concrete history.¹¹⁸ In Islam the human individual should retain no private purpose, and nothing peculiar, whereas in Christianity a self denial of the private or natural will aims at developing one's spiritual essence. This aspect of Islam, in Hegel's understanding, explains its fatalism and indifference to life. The similarity between the Enlightenment and the Islamic position on the concept of God lies in an abstract approach.¹¹⁹ (The editors of the English version of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* ascribe the absence of Islam in Hegel's treatment of determinate religions to the fact that historically it is not subsumed under Christianity, and it represents a contemporary rival.¹²⁰ In various passages in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, he stresses that the number of Muslims worldwide exceeds that of Christians).

The 1824 lectures on philosophy of religion seek to reconcile philosophy and religion, or more specifically, philosophy and the Church. Philosophy was considered to oppose religion and the Church because of its use of thought and rejection of representational form. The opposition between them is a false dichotomy because philosophy recognises the necessity of the representational mode. Yet Hegel considers the concept to be a higher expression of the truth, for while containing the forms of representation, it possesses its own content, while representation points to a reality that remains outside the subject and is not produced by itself.¹²¹ The purpose of philosophy is to know the truth and thus to know God in a concrete way. Therefore, in its affirmation that we cannot know God, the Enlightenment is opposed to philosophy, and opposes the fact that philosophy shows the rational content of religion, and that the Spirit, who is the Truth, is present in religion.

Within the realm of spirit, Hegel distinguishes three stages. The first is immediate and naive religion, which is the stage of faith. Secondly comes the understanding, and the type of reflection of the Enlightenment, and finally the community of philosophers (of those who philosophise). This schema places

¹¹⁸ Scholars note the fact that Hegel incorporated more details about determinate religions in the course of his various lectures, but his having read the Qur'an is not attested and remains an unlikely possibility, given his denial of any historical aspect in Islam.

¹¹⁹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, pp. 171–3.

¹²⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 242, n. 210.

¹²¹ Several scholars note that the opposition between subject and object, and human and divine, is retained within representation. See, for instance, Raymond Keith Williamson, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Albany: State of New York Press, 1984), p. 266. In this sense, it bears some resemblance to the faculty of the understanding in the way it proceeds, *ibid.*, p. 274. Representation stays within the confines of the finite, *ibid.*, p. 295. Williamson aptly notes, however, that philosophy, as much as religion, is also a *form* of conveying the truth (*pace* Hegel), therefore '[philosophical] language is also limited and has a symbolic meaning that can be grasped only by those within the esoteric circle', *ibid.*, p. 300.

philosophy above faith, but the latter still represents a necessary part in the development of the Spirit within human consciousness.¹²²

Unlike some trends in Protestant theology, Hegel does not advocate a literal reading of the Bible, but a reading that is guided by the Spirit, which he stresses is the Holy Spirit. In his description of philosophy, he also highlights that true philosophy is entirely consonant with Christian religion in its way of presenting the content of religion, and so it is entirely orthodox. In this context, he stresses the union between faith and reason, which had been sundered in different ways by the Enlightenment, and more recently by a subjectivist approach to philosophy and theology.

His theory of representation underpins his belief in the harmony between philosophy and religion. While philosophy concerns only a few individuals, religion is open to everyone, and therefore the content of both must be the same; only the form of expression differs.

The Lectures of 1827 on the Consummate Religion

God is the content of thought and philosophy, but can also be conceived by the faculty of representation, a point that is reiterated in the lectures of 1827. Hegel buttresses this point by explaining the three moments of the consummate religion, the first being the idea of God in itself, the second moment being constituted by representation and appearance, and the third moment pertaining to the community and the Spirit (a tripartition modelled on the three Persons of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three moments, as we have seen, also embody respectively the realms of universality, particularity and singularity).

Concerning the idea of God, he states that if the content is available for thought it must also be available for representation, especially given that most people are not familiar with philosophical thinking. The idea of God is first present to pure thinking, and this ‘is the eternal idea of God for itself, what God is for himself, i.e., the eternal idea in the soil of thinking as such’.¹²³

In the second place, the idea of God is available for representation, thus ‘not for us in the mode of thinking, but rather for finite, external, empirical spirit, for sensible intuition, for representation’.¹²⁴ The idea of God as present for the representation implies its manifestation in nature, and its apprehension by the finite and empirical spirit. God is then present for ‘finite spirit as finite spirit’.¹²⁵

The empirical and natural aspect of this manifestation emerges with the Incarnation of the Son, and also with the creation of nature. We notice that in

¹²² Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, p. 176.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 197. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 272.

¹²⁴ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, p. 197. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 272.

¹²⁵ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, p. 197. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 272.

addition to mentioning the Son as characteristic of this second moment, which is the moment of particularisation, the creation of nature also seems implied here.¹²⁶ Conceptually, with regard to the idea of God, the Son is not distinguishable from the Father. In a second instance, however, ‘the Son obtains the determination as other, and thus we pass out of the pure ideality of thinking and into representation’.¹²⁷ Hegel states that the first instance constitutes begetting while the second implies the production of nature, or creation. However, the difference between begetting and producing could simply mean the distinction between the procession of the Son from the Father in all eternity (in the immanent Trinity) and the birth of the Son (in a reference to the economic Trinity) in time. In this context, representation appears to stand in between sense perception and understanding, but sometimes representation and the understanding go hand in hand for Hegel – for instance, when we conceive God through his attributes (involving both representation and the understanding).¹²⁸

In the second moment of the Christian religion, centred on representation, the eternal idea emerges ‘out of universality and infinitude into the determinacy of finitude’.¹²⁹ Representation has its own forms, other than thinking, but their content is identical. In its relation to doctrine, representation mediates between intuition, faith and feeling on the one hand, and thinking on the other. Doctrine is found first in the form of faith. It must subsequently pass over into representation, and finally thinking – and this is how the historical process has unfolded. Hegel claims that in this process Church doctrine used philosophy. The development of doctrine is part of the Church’s teaching mission.

Hegel goes on to expound the inextricable link that binds philosophy and religion, making philosophy out to be the rational consciousness of religion. He states that ‘sustained by philosophy, religion receives its justification from thinking consciousness’.¹³⁰ He further remarks that philosophy is really the conveyor and judge of the true content of faith as well as feeling and intuition. It is thinking that is the absolute judge, which verifies and attests all forms of access to the truth.

Hegel concludes that philosophy (his in particular) is theology, in other words a rational attempt to understand the divine. Here too, like Averroes, he may have dreamt of supplanting the theology of his day, in particular in its subjectivist approach, as defended by Schleiermacher among others, with his

¹²⁶ A failure to distinguish adequately between the creation of the world and the generation of the Son appears to have been a frequent accusation against Hegel’s theology; see George S. Hendry, ‘Theological Evaluation of Hegel’, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34:4 (1981): pp. 339–56.

¹²⁷ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, p. 199, notes. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 274, n. 67.

¹²⁸ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, p. 202.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 215. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 290.

¹³⁰ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, p. 268. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 346.

own philosophy. The progress from feeling and representation is a natural and necessary process, according to Hegel, given the fact that religion is grounded in rationality. He argues to the effect that religion is a human activity, and is not found in animals. Therefore, the rational aspect must be brought to the fore and developed.¹³¹ However, intuition and representation are also forms of thinking, broadly construed. The truth as revealed to human beings must be available not only in the rational form but also as intuition and representation, insofar as they are endowed with feeling and sensation. Representation is characteristic of religion in itself, while thinking characterises philosophy. Philosophy thinks the content of religion, as we have seen. In any case, the truth comes to human beings as thinking beings. But forms other than thinking are finite and not the truth as a free form.

Philosophy is at home in conceptual thinking rather than representation.¹³² Religion (especially the non-revealed religions) is identified instead with representation, while philosophy is equated with conceptual thinking.

These *Lectures* evidence a more elitist position in stating that religion is for the general consciousness, or the common person, unlike philosophy.¹³³ Nevertheless, there is a sense in which religion represents the highest form of human consciousness, and religion and philosophy are identical in content, as both have the truth as object.¹³⁴

Some dogmas are once more analysed in the light of 'imagery' and the representational mode, such as the procession of the Persons within the Trinity and the manner in which the Father begets the Son.¹³⁵ But the truths of the life of Christ are analysed as facts. Yet again, negative aspects of representation that are not convertible with conceptual thinking are mostly identified with forms of religion that precede Christianity.

A growing appreciation for the role of speculative reason is to be observed in Hegel's philosophy, an evolution which has an impact on his analysis of religion. His praise of Scholastic philosophy and theology is a testimony to this interest in the rational understanding of faith. While the early writings are wont to skew dogma and highlight the significance of morality, the *Phenomenology* engages in a debate on the philosophical as well as theological implications of essential aspects of Christian dogma. Hegel's heightened interest in dogmatic theology, and its incorporation into his own view that God is Spirit and reveals himself as such to us, means that the identification of religion with representation as an inferior form of apprehending the truth is downplayed in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. One could also discern two forms of representation in his

¹³¹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 3, p. 276.

¹³² Ibid., p. 55.

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 59, 88. 'There is a sense that reason may be for a few, while the religion of the many ... must necessarily speak to imagination and the senses', William Desmond, *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 33.

¹³⁴ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 1, pp. 63, 79.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 356.

approach to religion, one clearly inferior, and one that is merely a translation of the content of religion into a language that is accessible to everyone, but has a purely philosophical meaning too. In addition, in these *Lectures* representation becomes especially associated with nature religion or previous forms of religion that are not revealed, a status that Hegel reserves to Christianity.

The Lectures on the History of Philosophy

Another important work dealing with the concept of philosophical and conceptual thinking, as well as the relation between philosophy and religion, is the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, in particular the introduction to the theme. Hegel could have limited himself to explaining the concept of philosophy, but he also compares it and contrasts it with the working principles of natural science – with its reliance on empirical observation – and with religion, with its dependence on representational thinking. Like science, ‘philosophy treats causes, the ultimate grounds of things. So, where universal causes or grounds, the ultimate grounds of things, get expressed, they share with philosophy precisely the feature that they are universal and, more specifically, that propositions or grounds of this kind are drawn from experience and inner sensibility’.¹³⁶ The history of philosophy shows the Spirit coming to know itself, and in this way it recalls the subject of religion or the philosophy of religion which shows God as coming to know and determining himself.¹³⁷ Thus, philosophy has the same goal as religion. And because it has a wide scope, philosophy in a sense deals with ‘everything that can be traced back to general principles’.¹³⁸

For Hegel, philosophy relies on the concept or the idea, which is concept determining itself – whereas representation projects an alien object, but this alienation from the object can be overcome in religion through cultus or worship:

In the case of religion we notice right away two definite features. The first is the object for consciousness; God, as known as represented to us, thus as object, is ‘over there’, is something other, and human beings stand ‘on this side’. The second feature is devotion and the cultus, and they involve the transcending of this opposition.¹³⁹

Thus, the subject of the history of philosophy itself is thought determining itself, occupied with itself.¹⁴⁰ By contrast, in sense perception the subject is preoccupied with something extraneous. Hence, in determining itself, philosophy

¹³⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–1826*, vol. I, p. 71.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 52.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

is free. Here we find at work the view that there is one sole reason behind the historical development of philosophy and that this development is goal-directed, culminating – not surprisingly – in Hegel’s own philosophy, whose system supersedes previous philosophical systems. In this sense, there is at bottom only one philosophy, which is the last and the richest. Hegel’s goal therefore is not to describe and catalogue the different philosophies in historical succession, and to offer a purely historical perspective, but to explain the necessary development of the concept of philosophy throughout history. To illustrate how the history of philosophy becomes enriched in the course of time, Hegel indicates how Plato’s philosophy contains the Pre-Socratic philosophies, in particular the Eleatic, the Pythagorean and the Heraclitean philosophies (with the underlying assumption that his own philosophy will contain all that has gone before).¹⁴¹ Each philosophy embodies the spirit of its age (in the same way that this spirit is carried over in any historical epoch).

The proper faculty of philosophy is thinking, which is the activity of the universal, and a specifically human activity. Introducing the theme of religion, Hegel states that human beings are capable of religion on account of their rationality, which points to the rational foundation of religion.¹⁴² However, as we have seen, representation, in contrast to conceptual thinking, is more closely linked to the particular than to the universal. The lines between universal and particular can appear somewhat blurred: faith as a religious form of apprehension also grasps the spirit ‘in a substantial, universal way’.¹⁴³ Here the finite human spirit grasps the infinite Spirit. Religious faith is an immediate apprehension of the Spirit.

If philosophy and religion have many points in common, some distinctions have to be made. Thus in religion, spirit takes on a sensible aspect, as indeed in art (religious art). In philosophy, on the other hand, the subject and the object are ever united. Moreover, philosophy further ‘spiritualises’ Christian doctrine, a process illustrated by Hegel in another instance of his philosophical exegesis of Christian dogmas:

For instance, God is said from all eternity to have begotten, and to beget, his son. The self-knowing on the part of divine spirit, its making itself into an object, is here termed ‘begetting a son’; spirit knows itself in the ‘son’, for it is of the very same nature [as the son]. This relationship of father and son, and of begetting, is drawn from living nature, not even from spiritual relations but from what is natural and living. This is how it is stated for purposes of representation, and one says it is not to be taken literally. What, then, is the proper sense of this thought-category? The proper sense is that it is to be taken in the form of thought. Thus when mythology speaks of the wars of the gods, it is readily conceded that what

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 76.

is meant are various natural forces or spiritual forces, which were interactive with, or even opposed to, one another.¹⁴⁴

Hegel fuses together the doctrine of the Son's procession from the Father with Aristotle's conception of God as thought thinking itself – for him these are two different ways of saying exactly the same thing.

Referring to the history of religion, Hegel affirms that religious consciousness progresses from a more immediate and sensible shape to a more spiritual one (culminating in Christianity). In addition to this process, there is a general progress from sensible representation to conceptual thinking – proof of this is the passage from a conflation of philosophy and myth in Plato's works, to a complete rejection of the mythological in Aristotle, himself a pupil of Plato's. But Hegel concedes the existence of mythological or religious aspects later, such as in Neoplatonism. At any rate, history shows the tendency of philosophy and conceptual thinking to prevail over religion and representational thinking. One way in which this 'superiority' is obvious is the fact that philosophy appears to comprehend religion and its object better than religion itself is able to do. Thus philosophy sees in religion and its object something essential and substantial, indeed conceptual, and not something accidental.¹⁴⁵ While religion alone does not grasp philosophy, and so cannot judge philosophy, philosophy grasps both itself and religion, the concept and representational thinking. He states that 'the last stage consists in justice being done once again to the religious content by means of the speculative concept, when the latter has perfected itself into the concrete concept of spirit'.¹⁴⁶

Another illustration of the interaction between philosophy and religion, and the use of the philosophical concept to explain religious ideas, is medieval Scholasticism, which showed an effort to 'grasp the church's dogma conceptually'.¹⁴⁷ Thus while religion is the truth as it is apparent to all human beings, philosophy is not for everyone. Religion has a rational element, but it is philosophy which perfects what is rational, the truly speculative in human beings:

In other words, religion must be consciousness of what is true in and for itself, and that is the general justification of the shape of religion. Speculative consideration, however, is not the general form of thinking for everyone.¹⁴⁸

In concluding his treatment of this subject, Hegel claims that 'speculation and religious representations are not as far removed from one another as they

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 82–3.

are commonly believed to be', so that his own approach to the subject is seen as striking a golden mean.¹⁴⁹

Representation is considered as one part of religion, alongside art and cultus, and is the closest to philosophy, producing doctrines.¹⁵⁰ While in other human activities the spirit is expressed in a particular way, in philosophy it expresses itself in a universal way:

In the other spheres we have determinations of spirit's rationality in particular forms. Art, religion, legal right, and so forth, do not make their appearance in thought as such. Philosophy is the concept or substance of the entire shape of spirit, of the whole of essential being, which the concept bring before itself in it, the single focal point that draws together all the radiations of its vitality.¹⁵¹

Hegel insists on the articulation of form and content with regard to religion in its relation to philosophy. If philosophy appears to criticise the concept of original sin, or evil, it is only attacking the form in which this content is religiously expressed, not the content itself, although sometimes, as he admits, the form goes into the content – and can be mistaken for it. Hegel stresses that form and content must be clearly distinguished when treating the relation between religion and philosophy.¹⁵²

The Berlin lectures provide a wealth of information on Hegel's perspective on the relation between philosophy and religion and their specific domains of conceptual thinking and representation. Whether his claim to the effect that the content remains the same in spite of the different forms in which these two disciplines present it is a question that remains controversial and is keenly debated.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 272.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 276.

Conclusion

The relationship between philosophy and religion in Averroes and Hegel presents remarkable similarities, especially with respect to the distinction they both draw between religious and philosophical discourse, which is the subject of the present study.

The similarities begin, perhaps, with the very prominence of this topic in their works. The attempt to harmonise the two disciplines is particularly explicit in Averroes and Hegel. Other philosophers set themselves the task of combining philosophy and religion, but they did so by subordinating philosophy to theology, as in the case of Saint Thomas Aquinas and other medieval Christian philosophers who were also theologians. In Averroes and Hegel, we have a different perspective, in that philosophy appears to gain the upperhand in this dialogue with religion, albeit for different reasons. While Averroes was a professional jurist and judge as well as a physician, he showed a keen interest in studying philosophy from an early stage and devoted all his free time to philosophy. Hegel made a conscious decision to become a professional philosopher around 1800, eventually becoming a professional teacher of philosophy in Heidelberg and subsequently in Berlin.

Both philosophers believe that the same truth is expressed, albeit differently, by religion and philosophy. This study has examined what it means to express the truth religiously and philosophically and what this means for the status of religion and philosophy.

In what follows, I will highlight the most salient similarities and differences between Averroes' and Hegel's approach to this issue.

For Averroes there is no question of a double truth, or a different message conveyed by religion and philosophy, as both express the same reality. This legitimises the study of philosophy, which offers to those who have the appropriate intellectual ability a privileged access to the truth.

The young Hegel is concerned for a popular education of mankind, but he later believes that philosophy is only for a few, and that for most people, religion provides access to the ultimate reality, God, or Spirit. For Averroes, those apt to study philosophy are in fact obliged to do so because otherwise they may fall into unbelief. The study of philosophy is furthermore acceptable and sometimes binding in an Islamic society because it does not contradict, but supports, the principles of Islam.

For Averroes there are three ways of believing in God, as well as in the prophetic missions and the afterlife. There can be no compromise regarding these three tenets, but the way of believing in them differs according to the class to which one belongs. A philosopher cannot accept as literally true the anthropomorphic descriptions contained in the Qur'an, but someone belonging

to the rhetorical class is allowed and indeed expected to do so. Any attempt to harmonise the message of the Qur'an and the philosophy of Aristotle will require a significant interpretative effort and method. Averroes lays out the rules for the interpretation of scripture in the *Decisive Treatise* and also in other works, in particular *Uncovering the Methods*. In a nutshell, if the literal meaning is clear to every class, then no interpretation is needed; otherwise the philosophers will interpret it according to the philosophy of Aristotle. This may seem a startling principle, but Averroes painstakingly seeks to show that no incompatibility arises between these two authorities: the religious and philosophical. Moreover, the lack of consensus on theoretical matters in Islam means that various interpretations of the Qur'an are possible, and that a philosophical interpretation is legitimate.

Averroes provides practical illustrations to show that this is the case. Philosophical interpretations should never be given to people who are of the rhetorical class, as this would cause unbelief in them. For interpretation, according to Averroes implies removing the literal sense and producing the metaphorical sense. The latter is a more spiritual or conceptual version of the former. For those who cannot think except in terms of images, this means to take away all meaning from the religious text in question, thus producing unbelief.

The possibility of interpreting a text in varying ways, and of producing a philosophical interpretation of the Qur'an, rests on the lack of consensus on theoretical matters in Islam, whereas a consensus on practice exists. Theoretical speculation regarding the meaning of scripture is thus allowed.¹ Therefore, no philosopher can be labelled an unbeliever on account of his scriptural interpretation, as al-Ghazzali had proposed, in particular regarding philosophers' defence of the eternity of the world, God's ignorance of particulars and the denial of the resurrection of the body. Averroes explains why Muslim philosophers are not heretics in their views on God's creation, God's knowledge and the resurrection. He also believes that every Muslim has a duty to believe in God's existence, the prophetic missions and reward and punishment in the afterlife. However, the way of believing in these three principles varies according to the class of assent to which one belongs. He distinguishes three classes, the demonstrative (the philosophers), the dialectical (the theologians) and the rhetorical (the multitude). The philosophers are masters of scientific, certain knowledge, and they know things as they are. In turn, dialectic discourse offers a metaphorical reading of the religious texts, but with no firm basis in Aristotle, which means that these

¹ Massimo Campanini distinguishes between the Arabic *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*, the first corresponding to exegesis (with a focus on linguistic analysis) and the second to hermeneutics (with a focus on the interpretation of the meaning of the text), Massimo Campanini, 'Averroes' Hermeneutics of the Qur'ān', in *Averroès et les averroïsmes juif et latin: Actes du Colloque international, Paris (16–18 juin 2005)*, ed. J.-B. Brenet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 215–30, p. 219. When discussing the interpretation of the Qur'an, Averroes speaks of *ta'wīl*, but in relation to Aristotle he employs *tafsīr*, clearly because the philosophical text requires no allegorical interpretation.

interpretations lack a scientific foundation. Rhetorical speech is used to convey religious truths to the majority of people, who have no formal education. The rhetorical method is a simpler art than demonstration and appeals to the feelings and emotions of the audience as well as their intellect, and it seeks to arouse the imagination. It deals with particulars rather than universals.

More specifically, demonstration teaches the art of inference and is based on sound syllogisms. It rests on absolutely certain first principles, and its premisses are essential, necessary, universal and certain. Demonstration is of the universal for the most part. In turn, particulars, including specific historical events or accidental happenings, are not truly part of demonstration. True demonstration includes definitions; hence, the range of demonstrable knowledge is limited and would include issues in mathematics and physics, as well as metaphysics, but not, for instance, history or ethics. In demonstration, one should only use clear terms, and not metaphors.

Dialectic includes the discussion of opinions and that which is known and commonly accepted. It uses induction and does not provide absolute certainty. For Averroes the dialecticians are the Islamic theologians who have sought to become the authoritative interpreters of scripture.

Rhetoric deals with what is probable and serves to provide advice, ascertain past events and praise or censure something or someone. It emphasises the role of the emotions in obtaining assent and does not lose sight of the mode of delivery. Rhetoric seeks to effect persuasion and treats probable suppositions and what resembles the true. Its goal is to produce virtuous actions as it seeks to influence free will in this direction. It uses examples, a simplified logic and induction from particulars. Averroes thinks of rhetoric specifically in an Islamic context with regard to Islamic law courts, although a political use is not to be excluded. Rhetoric aims at producing immediate assent in the audience. Averroes states that the truth is in any case always the same.

In Hegel, we find many similarities to Averroes' approach. The young Hegel is concerned with the education of the multitude, and religion for him is a means to achieve this goal. Therefore, he thinks of religion first simply as the best vehicle to promote morality. The mature Hegel will hold that religion conveys the truth about reality, about God, for most people, while philosophers approach the truth in a conceptual way.

Once Hegel's philosophical system becomes more clearly defined, in the period leading up to the publication of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, theological doctrines start being addressed in their own right, rather than being dismissed, as Hegel had done earlier. The early period is marked by an interest in religion, but not necessarily theology in any orthodox way. In the period spent in Jena, Hegel opts for philosophy and maintains an interest in religion and in particular theology. Thus emerges the comparison between philosophy and religion with their respective modes of looking at reality. Philosophy studies God from a conceptual or speculative perspective, which is not intuitive and not apprehended immediately, but involves the dialectical process and the power of the negative; in other words,

it involves a logical process, and the reconciliation of opposites. He develops his own syllogistic logic which integrates this notion of dialectic. Representation, the means used by religious consciousness to attain reality, God, lies somewhere between sensible experience and the intuition of the object, which remains always separate and beyond. This mode of apprehension is thus more closely linked to sense perception and the material, the particular, the historical, and it does not truly reconcile the subject to the object. Hegel's own 'biblical hermeneutics' develops at this stage, and he provides a rational, philosophical interpretation of fundamental Christian dogmas such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, original sin and Creation.

Different religions are discussed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* according to their levels of spirituality and concreteness, culminating in Christianity. For Hegel, all religions are manifestations of the Spirit, but only Christianity contains God's self-revelation to humankind, because it proclaims God made man in Christ. These different world religions are later studied especially carefully in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Art appears also as a vehicle for expressing the truth, although it is closer still to materiality than is religion; and Hegel affirms in various passages that the role of art is to be understood in conjunction with religion, as religion in the form of art, or religious art. In Christianity, there remain representational elements, which are particularly evident with the Incarnation of God, which will be subsumed under absolute knowing.

The Berlin lectures on philosophy of religion and the lectures on the history of philosophy treat the relation between philosophy and religion through a similar prism. Religion and philosophy share the same object, God, and philosophy is at bottom theology, and service of God. In Berlin, Hegel approaches theology as dogma. Moreover, God can be known through faith and revelation or through reason. Religion pervades all of human life, but at the same time is not merely a human production but comes from God. Even representation has its source in God, even though it does not represent the infinite as infinite. Rather, it is tailored to the receiving subject, when this is not a philosopher. Representation is related to specific religions, and can be found in them. The Spirit can alternatively present itself and its self-consciousness as thought or as representation, which are both forms of the absolute Spirit; and in religion, the object is represented rather than speculatively conceived. On the one hand, it is philosophy that explains religion, while religion cannot really conceptualise itself. On the other hand, philosophy only explains itself in explaining religion, meaning that the two are interdependent.² Faculties leading to representation are feeling and intuition, or perception and feeling. While art goes hand in hand with intuition, religion relies on representation, and philosophy is based on thought. The content of art is not as conceptually translatable as is that of religion, but even representation is related to the immediate and that which lacks proof and mediation. It is

² Therefore Jaeschke argues that representation and conceptual thinking are interdependent; see Walter Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Schule* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), p. 472.

philosophy which changes the content of representation into the form of thought. Moreover, representation employs figurative expressions, allegories, analogies and indeterminate forms; but there are different levels of representation, some being closer to thought, as in the case of Christianity, which affirms God as Spirit.

These lectures present in greater detail Hegel's philosophical interpretation of Christian dogmas, such as the Trinity. One such example is to view the Father as infinite power, Jesus as Logos and wisdom, and the Holy Spirit as totality. For Hegel, philosophy subsumes and is built on religion, but surpasses it in expression; indeed, philosophy is the 'spirit's very own thinking and is, accordingly, its specific substantial content'.³ The issue of representation as the specific form in which religion is expressed was explored by various kinds of Hegelians to defend or to discredit religion. The issue of representation was used by right-wing Hegelians to stress unity of content between religion and philosophy, and by left-wing Hegelians to stress the dissimilarity of content because of the different forms of presentation.⁴

The similarities between these two philosophers' approaches is not far to seek. Religion, and religious language more particularly, employs imagery and deals with the contingent and the historical. Philosophy and demonstrative or conceptual thinking are universal, scientific, and employ logic, although Hegel defends dialectic and Averroes demonstration as the most adequate logical discipline. Both philosophers restrict the study and practice of philosophy to a minority of people, while asserting that religion represents the truth for all. They both defend a philosophical reading of scripture which does away with the particular and contingent in religious texts.⁵ For Hegel, at least from a phenomenological aspect, it is not possible to reach the philosophical standpoint without being immersed in religion first. For Averroes, religion and philosophy are two expressions of the same reality, and one must be acquainted with religion and the Qur'an before studying philosophy. Philosophy and religion are thus inextricably bound together.

³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–1826*, vol. I, *Introduction and Oriental Philosophy*, together with the Introductions from the other Series of these Lectures, ed. Robert F. Brown, trans. by R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart with the assistance of H. S. Harris (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), p. 188.

⁴ See Walter Jaeschke, *Die Religionsphilosophie Hegels* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), p. 110, n. 1, citing Falk Wagner, 'Die Aufhebung der religiösen Vorstellung in den philosophischen Begriff', *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 18 (1976): pp. 44–73, p. 45.

⁵ The notion that philosophical concept is a more adequate description of reality has been challenged by various scholars. Reardon states 'Might it not be objected that the philosophical view is no more than a meagre aetiolated notion, whereas the religious image yields truth in a shape both fuller and more colourful? Yet this would only reverse Hegel's position, since philosophy would thus become merely the stepping-stone to religion, with the result that its whole status and function as the ultimate and completely adequate expression of spirit would have been forfeited'. Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 118.

However, they seem to show a preference for philosophy as the ultimate description of reality. In both there is a tendency to downplay the value of religious language in its own right as pointing to something unfathomable, even if neither Averroes nor Hegel can be considered radical rationalists in the sense of defending the idea that human reason can know everything and has no need for revelation.

Thus, neither Averroes nor Hegel believes in a double truth, but the format in which the true content is expressed varies according to philosophy and religion, the philosophical form of expression being superior to the religious. The role of Islam in Averroes, and the role of Christianity in Hegel, is undeniable as an inspiration to their own philosophies, and as a kind of measure or limit within which the discussion of philosophical themes is set. However, unlike the predominant position in the medieval Christian period, during which philosophy was considered as the study of reality based solely on reason and leading up to the study of theology or revelation, they place philosophy somewhat above religion as the more accurate and less materialistic or anthropomorphic expression of the religious content. The medieval Christian theologians and philosophers used philosophy in order to seek to understand and express religious truths and the content of revelation. Averroes and Hegel also use philosophy to explain religious language and expressions, but in such a way as to render it universal and ahistorical, superseding the specificity of religious language by means of philosophy.

For Hegel, as a post-Enlightenment philosopher, the metaphorical reading of religious expressions is arguably even more blatant than it is for Averroes, whose society made the radical rationalism of the Enlightenment next to impossible, in spite of a certain freedom to study philosophy – although Hegel, too, constantly had to ward off accusations of atheism or pantheism. Both philosophers show a particular inclination for philosophy and are philosophers rather than theologians; hence, when it comes to comparing philosophy and religion by way of analysing religious and philosophical language, the latter comes out the victor.

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